

ANNE TRUITT IN JAPAN



ANNE TRUITT IN JAPAN

ESSAY BY Anna Lovatt

Matthew Marks Gallery



TURNING

Anna Lovatt

I saw beneath me a wrinkled-prune land, purple in an apricot-violet mist of evening light. A shock of astonishment flashed through every cell of my body: an instinctive realization that nothing in my experience would help me now, but everything in my experience must be in readiness to learn.

—Anne Truitt¹

In March 1964 Anne Truitt landed in Tokyo with her husband and three young children. Surveying the landscape as their plane descended, she experienced a profound sense of alienation that remained with her until the family returned to Washington, DC, in June 1967. That Japan was topographically, culturally, and linguistically different from the United States was to have been expected. But the radical alterity Truitt encountered there unsettled her very sense of self, rendering an entire “methodology of living” — one that had served her from her childhood in coastal Maryland to her adulthood at the heart of Washington’s cultural elite — abruptly and permanently defunct.² As a sculptor concerned in her work with longitude and latitude, with placement and orientation, this physical and psychological dislocation had a significant impact on her practice. Not only did she have to adapt to new materials and techniques, her colors and forms became jarringly unfamiliar, as if to reflect her new environment. Truitt later destroyed most of the sculpture she produced in Japan, perceiving it as a deviation from her intended path. Yet she retained a remarkable body of drawings, which provide an opportunity to revisit this critically neglected period in her career.

The three years preceding her departure for Tokyo had been momentous for Truitt. Toward the end of 1961, buoyed by an encounter with the work of Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, and others at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, she produced her breakthrough sculpture *First* (FIG. 1). Three subtly dissimilar picket-like forms raised on a platform and braced by one vertical and two horizontal beams, *First* replaced the expressionistic figures and textured ziggurats of her earlier work with a deceptively simple structure charged with mnemonic associations.³ Truitt grasped the importance of this restrained yet emphatic piece immediately. Within two months of its production, she had taken on Kenneth Noland’s old studio, set up a bank account to fund her practice, employed a fabricator, and begun working incessantly.⁴ In October 1962 the dealer André Emmerich visited Truitt’s studio and offered her a

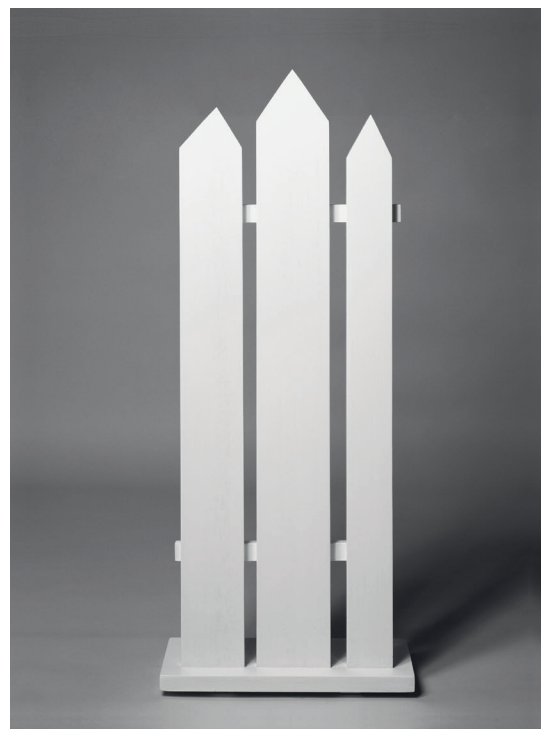


FIG. 1 *First*, 1961. Latex on wood. 44 ¼ × 17 ¾ × 7 inches; 112.4 × 45 cm. Baltimore Museum of Art

OPPOSITE *A Wall for Apricots*, 1966. Acrylic on aluminum. 78 ½ × 39 ½ × 17 inches; 199 × 100 × 43 cm. Photographed outside Truitt’s home in Shinjuku, Tokyo, February 1966



FIG. 2 The Truitt family (from left: Alexandra, Sam, James, Mary, Anne) at Yasukuni Shrine in Chiyoda, Tokyo, c. 1966

“one-shot show” at his New York gallery for the following February.⁵ At the opening he told Truitt that he hoped the show would be the first of many. Donald Judd and Michael Fried reviewed the exhibition, with Clement Greenberg later citing it as an important antecedent to Minimal art.⁶ One of the earliest surveys of that tendency, “Black, White and Gray,” included three works by Truitt when it opened in February 1964 at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. By the time she left for Japan, she had made over fifty sculptures and numerous works on paper since the new beginning heralded by *First*.

Truitt’s relocation to Tokyo curbed this momentum. The curator Walter Hopps later remarked, somewhat wonderingly, that she had simply “turned [her] back on success.”⁷ In the fiercely ambitious, male-dominated art world inhabited by Fried, Greenberg, and Judd, Truitt’s decision to leave the United States at the first flush of critical recognition was flatly incomprehensible. But Truitt’s personal circumstances already rendered her an anomalous figure within this rarefied context. A professional female sculptor at a time when there were few, she was also married to James Truitt — then vice president of the *Washington Post* — and the mother of three young children. After the couple briefly separated in the summer of 1963, his appointment as the Japan bureau chief for *Newsweek* forced Truitt to decide between finalizing their split and joining him in Tokyo.⁸ Reflecting many years later on her decision, she explained that it was her “duty,” while acknowledging that she had no idea at the time how much she was giving up.⁹ Considering the “psychological peril” she experienced in Japan and her subsequent destruction of the sculptures produced there, it is tempting to view this decision as a mistake and the period from March 1964 to June 1967 as a lacuna in her oeuvre.¹⁰ But what if we consider this moment not as a gap but as a “turn” in Truitt’s career — in the sense of both a reorientation and a permanent remodeling, of the kind performed on a piece of wood turned upon a lathe?¹¹ By examining Truitt’s Japanese work in detail, I hope to demonstrate its role in shaping her artistic practice.

SHIFTING CARTOGRAPHIES

With *First* and the sculptures produced thereafter, Truitt returned to the picket fences and slanted roofs of her childhood home in Easton, Maryland, uncovering in them the foundations of her artistic identity. Since 1944 she had been experimenting with a variety of sculptural themes and idioms, but in these vernacular structures she finally found her distinctive voice. Not only were the forms of her new work reminiscent of the architecture and topography of Easton, the titles of her

sculptures — such as *Catawba* and *Hardcastle* — made reference to the town's streets and their inhabitants. The particularity of place and its role in subjective formation became central to her work, as she later acknowledged: "The east-west-north-south coordinates, latitude and longitude, of my sculptures exactly reflect my concern with my position in space, my location."¹² As James Meyer has demonstrated, Truitt's cartographic understanding of the gridded streets of Easton guided her mature practice long after she had moved away.¹³ In Japan she lost her bearings, and with them the self-confidence that had propelled her work forward with remarkable velocity since November 1961.¹⁴

Yet the tenacity that had kept her working before this period of critical recognition — and which had enabled her to balance the demands of her practice with those of her family — remained with Truitt after her relocation to Tokyo. She stubbornly refused to stop working, sensing that to do so would be "fatal."¹⁵ In June 1964 she met with Kusuo Shimizu of the Minami Gallery, one of the few contemporary art galleries in Tokyo. During the early 1960s Minami presented the work of American artists including Sam Francis, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg, along with that of Japanese artists such as Shusaku Arakawa and Atsuko Tanaka. With Shimizu's help, Truitt obtained a three-month residency at the Japan Artists' Center, where she was given a temporary studio that had previously been occupied by Johns. She was also offered a solo exhibition at Minami, to open in October 1964. While working on the show, she completed a three-month Japanese language course; spent time with other Americans in Japan, including the CIA officer Herbert Burrows, the artist James Lee Byars, and the *Newsweek* journalist Bernard Krisher; and attended social engagements with her husband in Tokyo, Chiba, and Osaka. James Truitt's position gave the couple access to traditional state functions, including a cherry blossom party hosted by the Japanese prime minister and a birthday celebration for Emperor Hirohito held at Tokyo's Imperial Palace.

The Truitts arrived in Japan at a pivotal moment in the nation's history. In October 1964 the Olympic Games were held in Tokyo, offering Japan the opportunity to rehabilitate its international reputation following the destruction of World War II. This major sporting event — the first to be telecast internationally — expedited the rebuilding of Tokyo and the modernization of the city's infrastructure. Rather than a reconstruction, Tokyo's postwar metamorphosis might be understood as a dramatic rearticulation of urban space, resulting in a notoriously vast and dense megalopolis. A new metropolitan highway network was constructed in preparation for the Olympics, and the Shinkansen "bullet train" was launched nine days before the opening ceremony, with the Truitts among

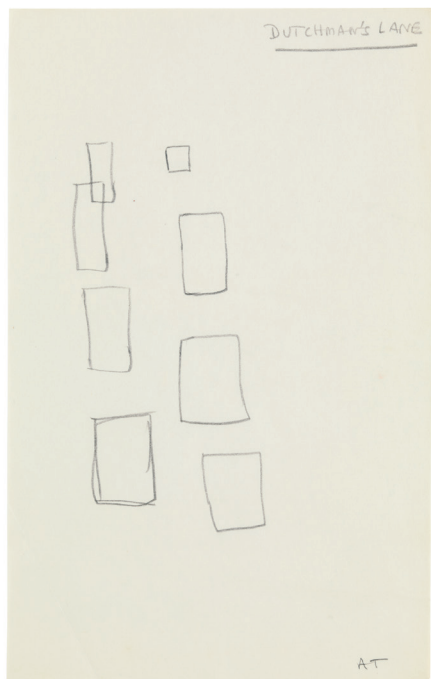
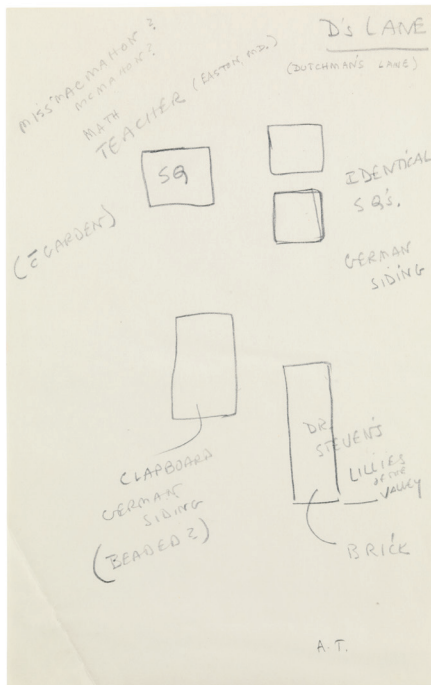


FIG. 3 *Dutchman's Lane*, 1961–62.
Graphite on paper. 8 × 5 inches; 20 × 13 cm

FIG. 4 *Dutchman's Lane*, 1961–62.
Graphite on paper. 8 × 5 inches; 20 × 13 cm

the VIP passengers on its inaugural day of service. Infrastructural and technological developments like these prepared Tokyo for an influx of visitors to add to a rapidly expanding population, which had surpassed the ten million mark in 1962, making the city the largest metropolis in the world.

Yet Tokyo's exponential growth also made it a city of incongruities, as a special issue of *Life* magazine dedicated to Japan observed in September 1964: "It has subways, speedways, highways, superhighways, artificial ski slopes and air-conditioned taxis, but practically no street names and only bafflingly nonconsecutive house numbers."¹⁶ Expanding on Meyer's suggestion that "Tokyo's intricate cartography eluded [Truitt's] comprehension," we might add that she was not alone in this experience.¹⁷ The precipitous growth and cartographic rearticulation of urban space was a potent source of inspiration and anxiety within Japanese culture, as indicated by the work of the Metabolist architects and the art collective Hi Red Center.¹⁸ A poster produced by the latter in 1965 documents the group's activities on a map of Tokyo splintered with arrows and obscured by text, as if to exacerbate its inherent incomprehensibility. The events include a performance on a train on the Yamanote loop line, which encircled the city center, and a "cleaning event" in the Ginza district, where Truitt's temporary studio was located, parodying the government's aggressive sanitization of the city in preparation for the Olympics. As curator Doryun Chong has written, "Japan's wholesale reconstruction in the first postwar decade and the period that followed was so thorough that it had to be engaged not only on the social and spatial strata, but also on the subjective levels of the individual and the body itself."¹⁹ A displaced subject wrenched from her own past and confronted daily with the shock of the new, Truitt experienced Tokyo's dynamism and dissonance with wounding intensity.

Given Truitt's acute sensitivity to place, it is instructive to compare a map she drew of her second, more permanent Tokyo studio (FIGS. 5 AND 6) with two schematic renderings from 1962 of Dutchman's Lane, a street in Easton. Meyer describes how in one drawing (FIG. 3) Truitt distills her memory of Dutchman's Lane into five shapes signifying buildings, which she annotates with the names of their inhabitants and brief architectural and horticultural details.²⁰ In the other drawing (FIG. 4) these notations are omitted, leaving seven warped quadrilaterals that, as Anne Wagner has noted, can barely be identified as a place at all.²¹ In short, Truitt's drawing would be useless as a map. The forms of the buildings have been so radically abstracted that they have become detached from the specificity of the location, facilitating the more complex play of reference that characterizes Truitt's sculpture. The drawing of her Tokyo studio is, by contrast, bluntly utilitarian, seemingly guarding against the very real

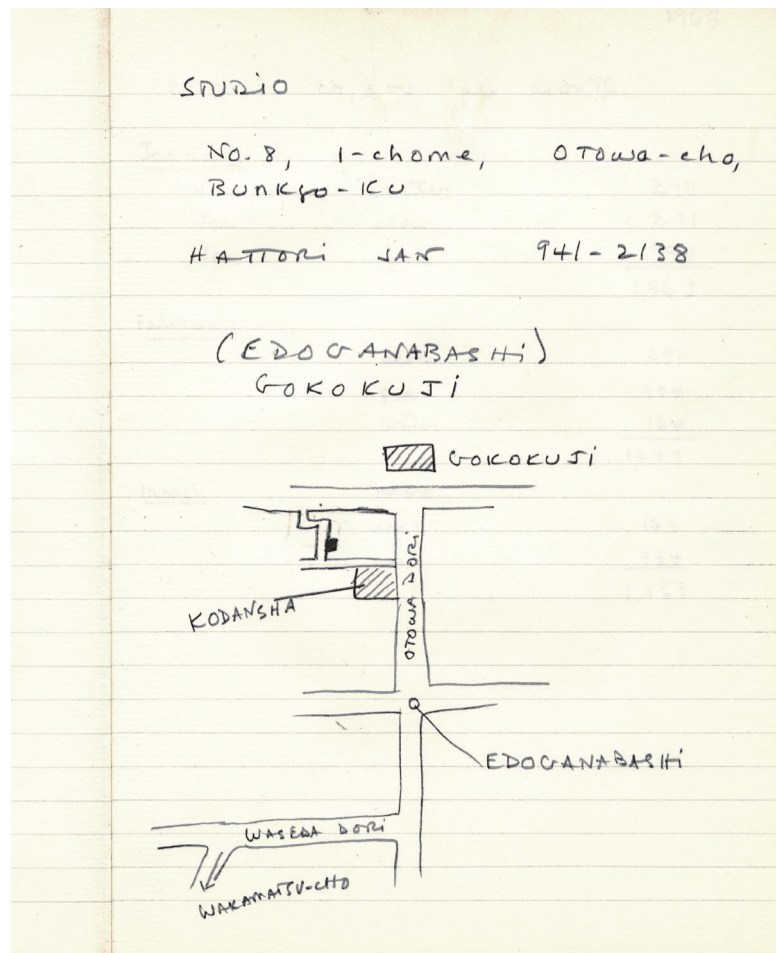


FIG. 5 Map of Ginza, Tokyo, in Truitt's 1964 notebook. The small black square indicates her studio

FIG. 6 Anne Truitt's studio in Ginza, Tokyo, 1966

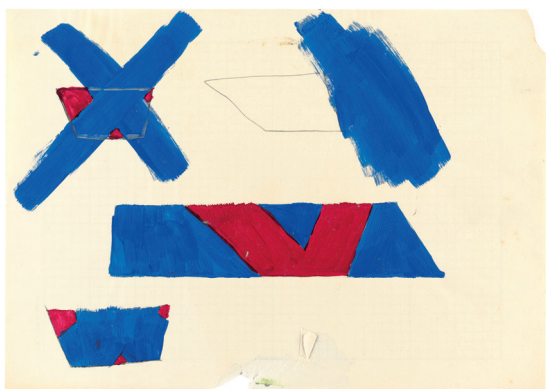


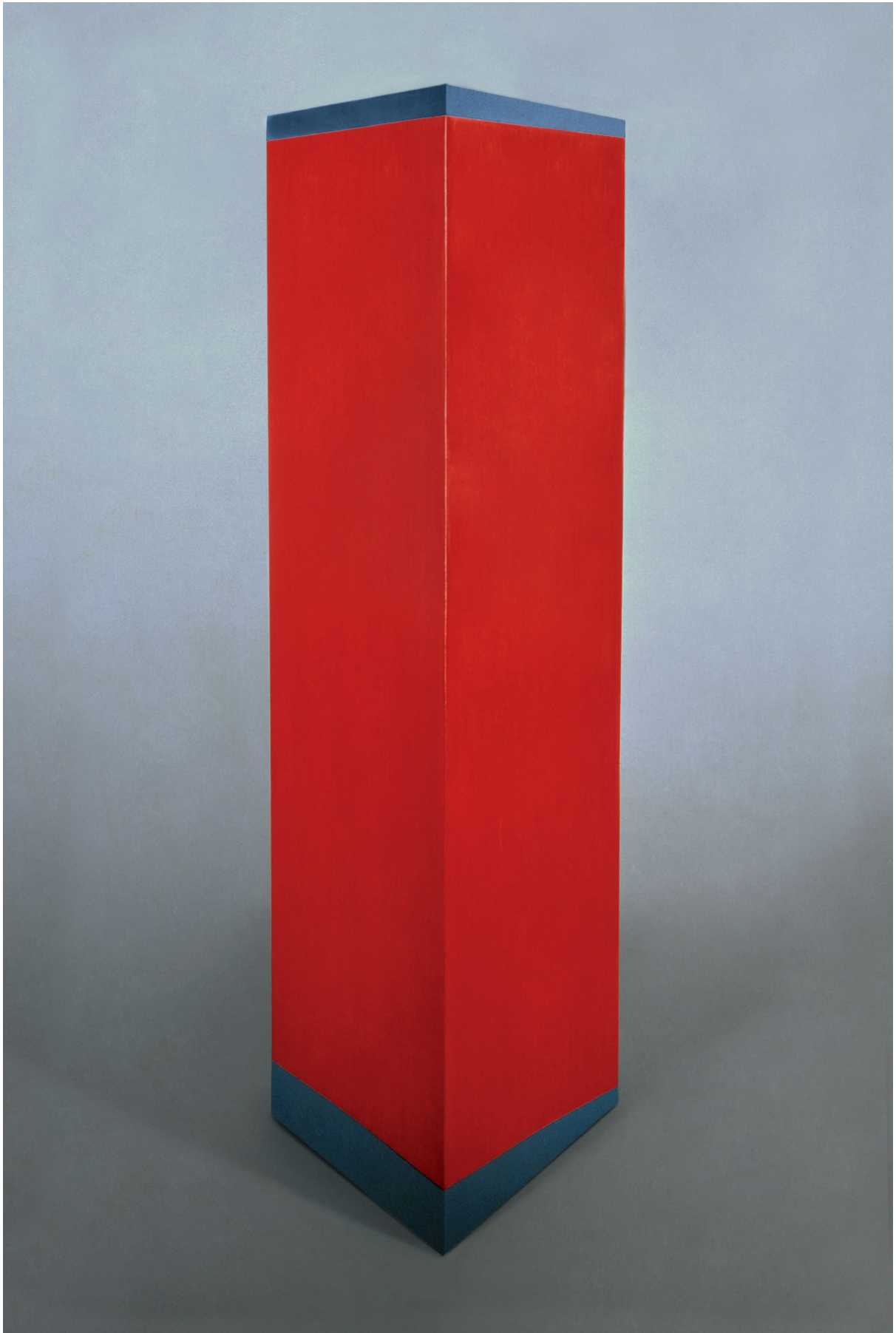
FIG. 7 *Working Drawing, Working Colors, Japan, 1964.*
Acrylic and graphite on paper. 8 ¼ × 11 ¾ inches; 21 × 30 cm

possibility that she might lose her way.²² Unlike the free-floating rectangles of Dutchman's Lane, the buildings are anchored to carefully drawn streets identified by name and oriented by landmarks. Truitt's studio is marked with a small black square hugging a narrow alleyway in the shape of a zigzag. Having somehow survived the wartime carpet bombing of the city, it was, Truitt wrote, "a strange alley — tiny wooden houses inhabited by working people — who saw that I worked too and somehow made a little place for me in the fabric of their daily lives."²³ Yet this workplace was not entirely welcoming: men used the alley to urinate, and one of Truitt's elderly neighbors projected a real or imagined hostility that felt to the artist like "murder."²⁴ Accustomed to thinking of her studios as "home," Truitt found that the journey to her Tokyo workspace instead reinforced her displacement on a daily basis.

A SCULPTURE OF DISJUNCTIONS

While working in her temporary studio at the Japan Artists' Center, Truitt made contact with Nihon Almit, a company known for developing the first aluminum solder in the late 1950s. Although the sculptures that had earned her critical recognition were made of wood, she had been considering a switch to metal since the summer of 1963, reaffirming this intention in a newspaper interview on her arrival in Japan.²⁵ She later implied that her decision was in part practically motivated, since aluminum sculptures would be easier to ship back to the United States for exhibition. The lightness and flexibility of aluminum facilitated formal experimentation, prompting Truitt to use working drawings and paper maquettes to conceptualize more complex forms. This use of drawing as an exploratory and preparatory tool marked a significant departure for the artist, who once stated that she rarely made sketches for her sculptures.²⁶ Her working drawings from this period are filled with angular, irregular shapes, from skewed trapezoids to dynamic zigzags (FIGS. 11, 13 & 18). These unpredictable forms have an equally idiosyncratic relationship with color. In a number of working drawings, Truitt excised sculptural objects from more expansive painterly fields, so that the sculpture's color is a fragment of a two-dimensional pattern that extends beyond its edges. In one such piece, a blue cross strikes out the sculpture's red form with a negating, confrontational force unusual in Truitt's work (FIG. 7). Given the colliding shapes and patterns of her working drawings, this disjunctive relationship between color and form appears to have been carefully orchestrated, even if the artist came to regret it. The tension was exacerbated in her sculptures, where the paint required for aluminum formed a skin on its surface rather than sinking in, as acrylic had done with wood.

FIG. 8 *Back, 1964.* Acrylic on aluminum. 79 × 19 × 19 inches;
201 × 48 × 48 cm. Photographed in Tokyo, 1964





FIGS. 9 & 10 Truitt's first one-person exhibition at Minami Gallery, Tokyo, October 1964

Back (1964) (FIG. 8), one of four sculptures included in Truitt's 1964 Minami show, encompasses these erratic shifts and ruptures to disorienting effect. Close in form to the columnar works that later became her signature, its sides lean out almost imperceptibly, so that the top is in fact slightly larger than the base.²⁷ This top-heavy structure is further unbalanced by two bands of blue at either end of an expansive red field. Instead of running parallel to the ends of the column as they do in many of Truitt's sculptures, the top band slants slightly and the bottom one dramatically, creating perspectival illusions that deviate from the physical space occupied by the work. While Truitt aligned her columnar sculptures with her own body and the four points of the compass, *Back* is determinedly off-kilter. The work's formal irregularities and optical distortions resist immediate apprehension, confounding expectations and puzzling the viewer at every turn.

Along with the four sculptures, Truitt's Minami show included five large works on paper that, unlike her working drawings, she regarded as autonomous pieces. Without relating directly to a specific sculpture, *Truitt '64 [3]* (1964) (FIG. 11) resembles the jagged, floor-hugging forms and glacial palette of the sculptures *Morning Walk* and *Summer Run* (FIG. 12), which were produced in 1964 but not shown until Truitt's second solo exhibition at Emmerich, in February 1965. In the drawing, a slender, irregular octagon is traversed by three horizontal bands of cream, sea green, and navy. These colored strata ground the work while its wayward angles seem to take flight, so that form appears to struggle against color, or vice versa. In the related sculptures the colored bands are slanted rather than horizontal, creating a sense of mobility reflected in the works' perambulatory titles. Photographs of *Morning Walk* suggest that it was once displayed upturned, in a radical departure from the precise coordinates Truitt had previously applied to her work.

Truitt's Minami exhibition received brief but positive notice in the Japanese press, and in November 1964 the four sculptures were shipped to New York for her forthcoming show at Emmerich. When a second shipment of six new works including *Summer Run* and *Morning Walk* was delayed because of a dockworker's strike, sculptures from the Minami exhibition were displayed alongside earlier ones from her 1963 Emmerich show. This twist of fate resulted in a situation few artists would relish — the stark juxtaposition of an already acclaimed body of work with new sculptures that marked a significant departure. Despite some positive reviews, the comparison was generally felt to be unfavorable to the new work, and Truitt, who had travelled to New York for the opening, returned to Tokyo with her confidence shaken. In a series of working drawings from spring 1965 she interrogated the relationship between form and

color in her recent work, annotating one drawing with an admonishment: “This is a painted sculpture, what I do not want.”²⁸ Elsewhere she reflected, “What is important to me is not geometrical shape per se, or color per se, but to make a relationship between shape & color which feels to me like my experience.” (FIG. 36) She began to consider returning to Liquitex paint in the hope of recapturing the subtle inflections of her earlier wooden sculptures.²⁹ Yet her aluminum structures continued to pose problems she would ultimately attribute to a fundamental somatic incompatibility, stating that the metal was just “too disparate” from her own body.³⁰

Truitt and others saw the formal and chromatic incongruities of the Japanese sculptures as evidence of their failure. But I want to argue that, without representing her encounter with Tokyo in any literal way, the skewed geometries and dissonant palettes of these works function to unsettle and disorient the viewer in a manner that conveys something of Truitt’s experience in the city. While the Minimal artists to whom she was once compared insisted that their work was nonreferential, Truitt claimed that she sought to convey the “maximum meaning in the simplest possible form.”³¹ Meyer has argued that such a complex mode of signification first emerged in her Japanese sculptures, which, he claims, were “replete with meaning.”³² Yet he does not venture exactly which meanings, sensations, or experiences these abstract works might codify or convey. Building on his foundational research, I want to suggest that the drawings and sculptures Truitt produced in Tokyo articulate, sometimes awkwardly and with palpable difficulty, a decisive shift in the artist’s spatial experience that is brought to bear on the body of the viewer. The titles of the four works shown at Minami — *Back*, *Down*, *Here*, and *Out* — evoke an abstract, dislocated relationship with *space*, in contrast to the intimate connection to *place* referenced in Truitt’s earlier titles. And the temporal disjunctions of the Japanese works — the unexpected jolts and ruptures that confront anyone who circumvents them — speak at once to Tokyo’s startling juxtaposition of old and new and the jarring sense of anachronism that Edward Said has identified with the condition of exile, a word the artist herself used to describe her experience in Japan.³³

The temporal discontinuity of Truitt’s 1964 sculptures is also evident, in a different way, in a series of drawings in graphite and acrylic begun the following year. Anomalous within Truitt’s Japanese production, these works recall the picket fences and clapboard houses of Easton. While the sculpture *First* condensed these associations into a single object, her related drawings from 1965 to 1966 extricate and meditate upon a multitude of architectonic structures — from the clapboard walls and pointed roof of Easton’s Third Haven Friends Meeting House (PAGES 65–67), to the

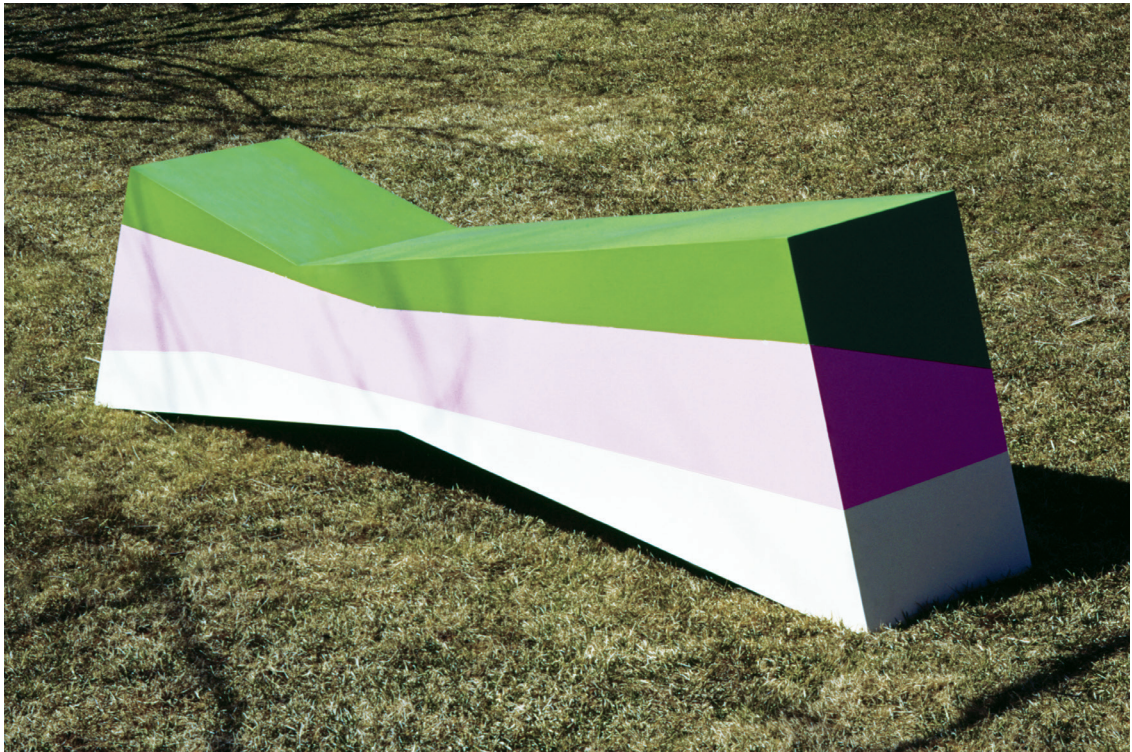
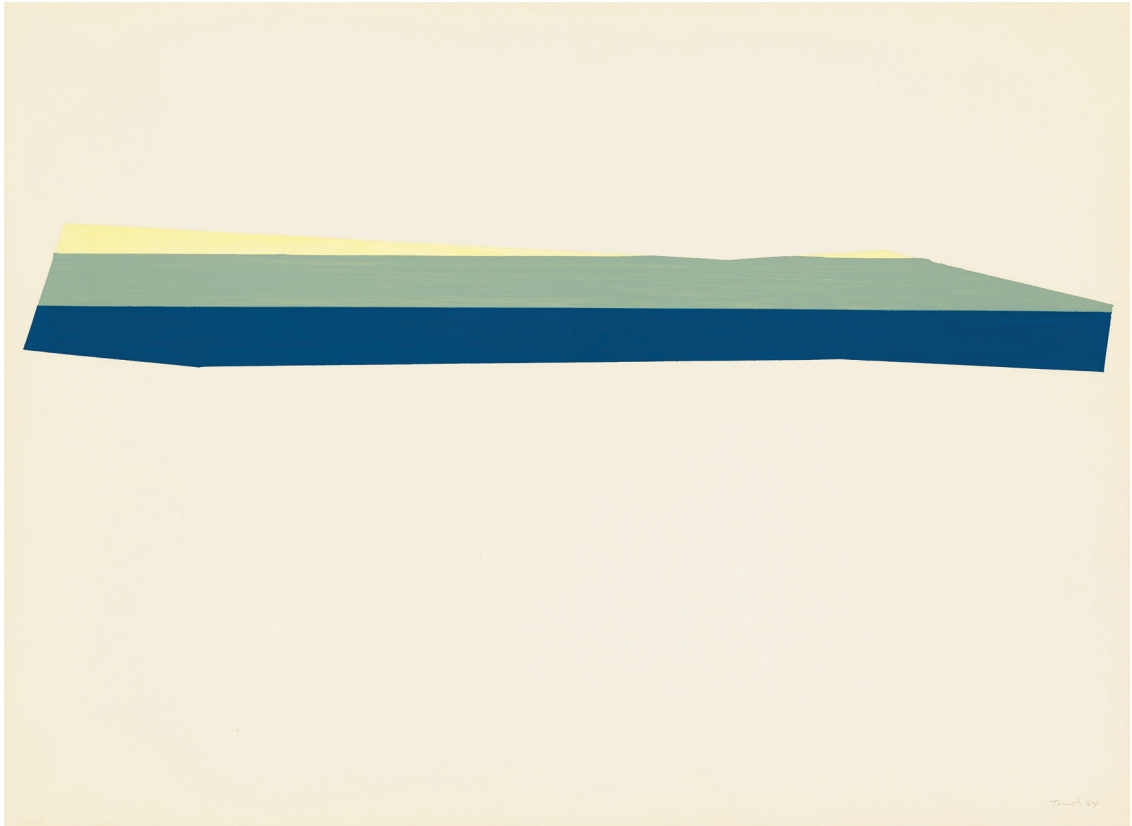


FIG. 11 *Truit '64 [3]*, 1964. Acrylic on paper. 22 × 30 inches; 56 × 76 cm

FIG. 12 *Summer Run*, 1964. Acrylic on aluminum. 27 × 92 × 27 inches; 69 × 234 × 69 cm. Photographed in Roxbury, CT, c. 1966

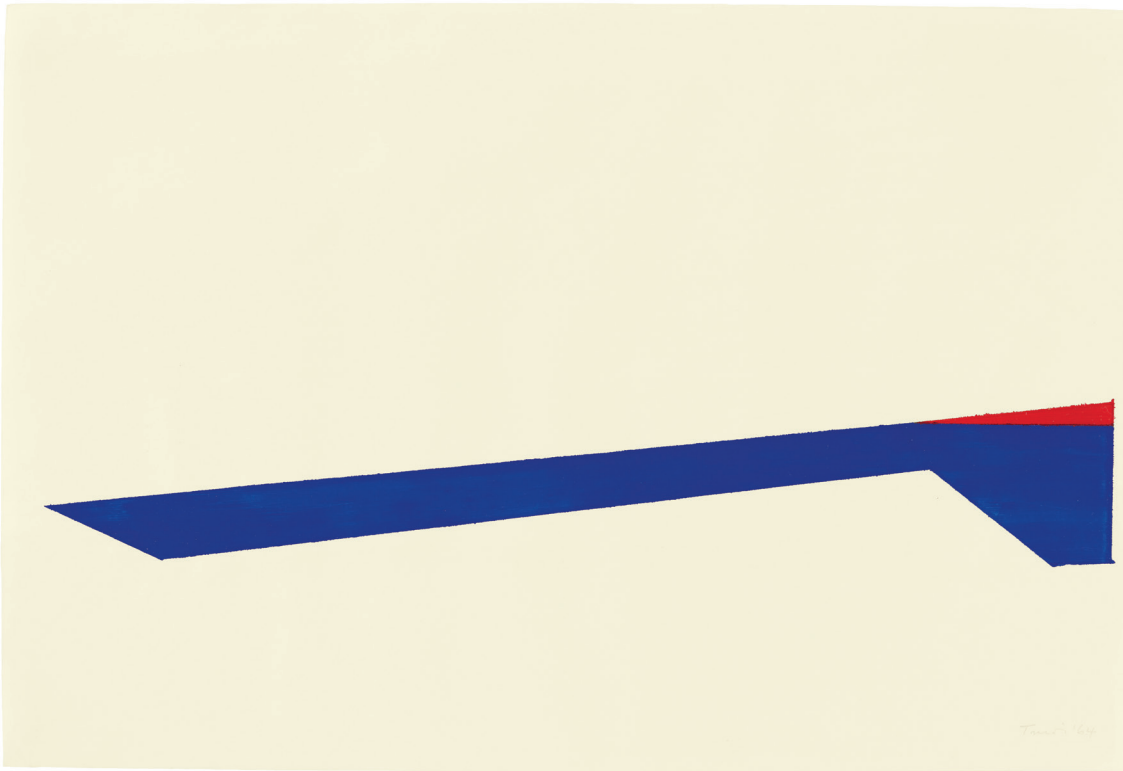


FIG. 13 *Truitt '64 [1]*, 1964. Acrylic on paper. 12 × 17 ¾ inches; 31 × 45 cm

FIG. 14 *Down*, 1964. Acrylic on aluminum. 19 ¼ × 70 ½ × 14 inches; 49 × 179 × 36 cm. Photographed in Tokyo, 1964

irregular pickets of a humble garden fence (PAGES 66 & 69).³⁴ These references assume further poignancy within the Japanese context, where they surface like involuntary memories of a familiar place, puncturing Truitt's sense of alienation and rendering it more acute.³⁵ They bear out Said's suggestion that "for an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally."³⁶ Extending Said's musical metaphor, these drawings might be said to function like a three-part counterpoint, juxtaposing the present of Japan with the past of Truitt's childhood and the more recent memory of her artistic breakthrough of the early 1960s. As Truitt acknowledged, the joyous epiphany of *First* was severed from the present by her departure for Tokyo, abruptly disconnecting her from the proximate past.³⁷

FOLDED SPACE

In May 1965 Truitt returned to Almit to fabricate a series of flat, free-standing structures in folded aluminum. The topological maneuver of the fold had numerous reference points in Japanese culture, from the ancient art of origami to the folded screens used to partition and reconfigure domestic space. Folding was also central to the work of James Lee Byars, who had become one of Truitt's closest friends in Japan. Byars incorporated Japanese paper into his performances, which drew on elements of Noh Theatre and ceremonial folding and wrapping (FIG. 15). His prodigious correspondence, including many letters to Truitt, involved rolled and folded sheets of paper, which the recipient was often instructed to destroy. Another reference point was Tokyo's Meiji Shingu shrine, where the iris garden was planted in diminishing waves that Truitt likened to the mouse's tail in *Alice in Wonderland*. An illusion of distance was thus created in a relatively small space, which Truitt saw as providing a way out of the spatial "bind" in which she felt her work had become caught:

If I proceeded in the direction I had been working, I had to turn toward larger and larger objects. What I conceived, plastically, in terms of directly apperceived volume, loomed outside reasonable dimensions — 20 feet high, 30 feet long, 80 feet deep; 100 feet high, 80 feet long, 300 feet deep. I was really hung up. [...] So I turned to sheets of aluminum, which would define a space for me in terms of force, actual perceptible plastic force.³⁸

By manipulating flat sheets of material, Truitt sought to imbue her works with a sense of scale that transcended their physical size, collapsing their



FIG. 15 James Lee Byars performance at the Kyoto Independent exhibition, 1967



FIG. 16 Anne Truitt and Clement Greenberg in the exhibition "Two Decades of American Painting" at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, October 1966

volume into diagrammatic vectors of energy. Further spatial transformations were facilitated by the deft maneuver of the fold, which could, concertina-like, compress an expansive surface into a smaller area, creating a play of light and shadow, proximity and depth. In works like *Bolt* (1965) (FIG. 17), lines made by folding intersect with the painted diagonal that traverses the sculpture, physically and optically contorting it into a charged zigzag.

Although Truitt continued to work in this vein for the remainder of her time in Japan, she subsequently came to view the flatness of these sculptures as counterintuitive, negating her desire for modulation and depth.³⁹ Emmerich, Greenberg, and Noland responded enthusiastically to color transparencies of the works during the fall of 1965, but Greenberg expressed his disappointment to Truitt when the first shipment of sculptures arrived the following summer. He advised her against exhibiting the sculptures as a group, accusing her of "Orientalizing: arting things up with distilled good taste."⁴⁰ The geopolitical stakes of this criticism become apparent when we consider Greenberg's discussion of so-called Oriental art in his 1955 article "American-Type Painting." Arguing that Abstract Expressionist painting had relocated the epicenter of advanced art to the United States (and more specifically, New York), Greenberg rejected the "cant [...] about a general Oriental influence" on the movement, as tenuously predicated on "this country's possession of a Pacific coast." "Not one of the original abstract expressionists," he wrote, "has felt more than a cursory interest in Oriental art. The sources of their art lie entirely in the West."⁴¹ Such cultural imperialism was bolstered by exhibitions like "Two Decades of American Painting," which Greenberg accompanied to Tokyo in the fall of 1966 (FIG. 16). The exhibition was organized by the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art, which some have claimed was a Cold War initiative covertly funded by the CIA.⁴² It is testament to Truitt's open-mindedness and independence that she was simultaneously close to Greenberg and to Byars, whose ephemeral, interdisciplinary practice would have been anathema to the modernist critic. Rather than reject Japanese culture like Greenberg or enthusiastically appropriate it like Byars, Truitt engaged with it abstractly, via the topological maneuver of the fold.

Perhaps heeding Greenberg's advice, Truitt exhibited a folded sculpture only once, in the group show "Color + Space" held at Minami in the fall of 1966. Curated by the influential critic Yoshiaki Tōno, the exhibition also included work by Truitt's compatriot Sam Francis and six Japanese artists: Arata Isozaki, Katsuhiko Yamaguchi, Shintarō Tanaka, Tomio Miki, Kazuo Yuhara, and Mamoru Goto. Truitt's concerns were closest to those of Yamaguchi, whose sculptures of the early 1960s consisted of



FIG. 17 *Bolt*, 1965. Acrylic on aluminum. 78 ½ × 33 × 12 inches; 199 × 84 × 30 cm. Photographed outside Truitt's home in Tokyo, February 1966

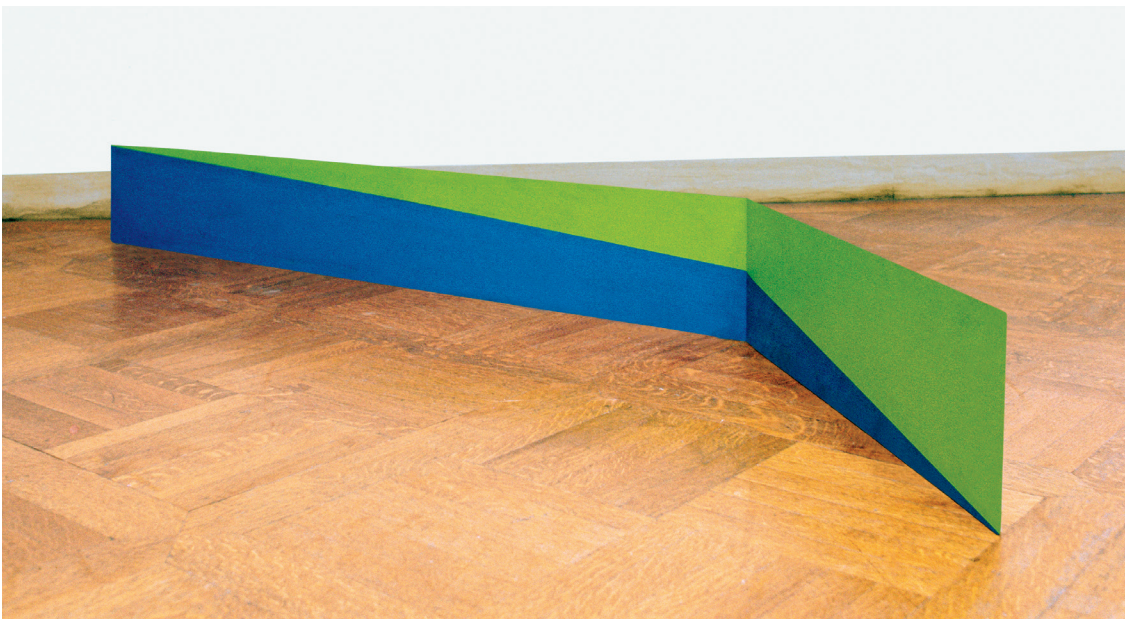


FIG. 18 *3 December '65*, 1965. Acrylic on paper. 20 ½ x 27 ½ inches; 52 x 70 cm

FIG. 19 *Spring Wind*, 1966. Acrylic on aluminum. 12 x 39 x 79 inches; 30 x 99 x 201 cm. Photographed at the Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, DC, 1971

malleable sheets of cloth or wire mesh pulled, rippled, and curved into taut apertures or billowing cumuli. These idiosyncratic objects — which were often hung on the wall or suspended from the ceiling — exist somewhere between the pictorial and the sculptural, as could be said of Truitt's works in folded aluminum.⁴³ And although their figurative qualities are distinct from Truitt's abstract concerns, Miki's signature ear sculptures indicate the extent to which the body might be understood as a topological structure, the creases, folds, and wrinkles of which continue to fascinate psychoanalysts and molecular biologists.⁴⁴

The play of two and three dimensions evident in Truitt's folded sculptures is also apparent in her drawings from 1965. In *21 June '65* (PAGE 41) a rectangle is extended by lines that on first glance make it appear to recede toward two incompatible vanishing points. A line traversing the rectangle connects these two points, voiding this momentary impression of perspectival depth. What results is a crystalline polygon that operates like an "impossible object" — a two-dimensional figure that the eye misinterprets as the projection of a three-dimensional form. This kind of optical illusion was central to the Op art movement surveyed in the MoMA exhibition "The Responsive Eye," which Truitt had seen when visiting New York earlier in 1965 for her solo show at Emmerich. The sculptures in her own exhibition were likened to Op art by reviewer Lawrence Campbell, who observed that Truitt's colors, "contrasty or bright, subdued or palely opposing each other — slice and destroy the appearance of volume, flatten it to create, sometimes, the illusion of a portable landscape."⁴⁵ This violent confrontation between depth and flatness, physical and perspectival space, was exacerbated in Truitt's folded sculptures and contemporaneous drawings. Yet the formal restraint of her work counters Op art's tendency to inundate and dazzle the viewer with illusionistic effects. Rather than seeking to trick the eye, Truitt's drawing manifests her own struggle to visualize dynamic impulses that eluded capture in sculptural form.

UNRULY COLOR

Unlike *21 June '65*, most of Truitt's works on paper from this period feature slender facets of acrylic paint in intense, sometimes dissonant colors. Color was a troubling issue for Truitt throughout her time in Japan, partly due to the sculptures' marine paint, the limitations of which forced her to work with colors that "didn't at all match what was in my head."⁴⁶ Even the light in Tokyo was different from that in the States — as playfully acknowledged by Byars, who took to wearing blue-tinted spectacles. Truitt later said that her sense of color "failed" in Japan,

although it might be more accurate to say that it was first skewed, then recalibrated.⁴⁷ In her 1965 drawings, the somber hues that had characterized her debut show at Emmerich gave way to a more acidic palette. *19 July '65* (PAGE 57) takes the form of a slender polychromatic zigzag traversing an otherwise blank page. Although the drawing is formally related to her low-slung folded sculpture *Spring Wind* (1966), the lateral spread of *w* is more extreme, resulting in a striking, attenuated strip of color. This strip appears to have been bent at either end, skewing it up on the left and down on the right. The three sections that result are each divided diagonally into two colors: vermillion and puce, puce and gold, gold and mint green. While the bends in Truitt's aluminum sculptures resulted in an awkward precariousness, here color bounds and rebounds with the rapidity and weightlessness of refracted light. In her notes, Truitt wrote that her color was composed of "variations of light" that enabled her to feel the "lines of force" manifest in her sculptures.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is in her 1965 drawings that these dynamic vectors are most keenly felt.

Despite the precision with which color is applied to *19 July '65*, there is something jarring about the palette, a fact that corroborates Truitt's suggestion that her sense of color was thrown "off" in Japan.⁴⁹ Her journal *Daybook* begins with a scene in Kyoto, where the artist encountered women rinsing dyed cloths in the Kamo River. As Truitt looked on, "The unwieldy lengths of cloth rippled out in long ribbons of blue and green and yellow and orange and red. The river rushed over the colors, the cloth whipped in the swift waves, the women held on to the streamers for dear life."⁵⁰ Truitt used this anecdote as a metaphor for the psychological unwinding she experienced during her first retrospective, in 1973, but it could just as easily apply to her fraught relationship with color in Japan. Unruly and noncompliant, color became something to be grappled with, where it had once been so deftly modulated and controlled. Yet this struggle ultimately proved productive, resulting in a unique body of works on paper that diverge in striking and intriguing ways from the rest of Truitt's oeuvre.



FIG. 20 Drawings hung to dry in Truitt's Tokyo studio, 1965

In the summer of 1965 Truitt wrote to Emmerich that she had begun to experiment with Japanese paper, which she had purchased from a Meiji-era specialty paper shop in Tokyo. In contrast to the resistant surface of aluminum, these absorbent sheets could be dipped in and saturated with color, much like the textiles she had seen rinsed in the Kamo River. By 1966 her experiments had led to a series of glazed works in ink and dye on Japanese rice paper. To produce them, she soaked the paper in shallow trays filled with ink, hanging each sheet to dry on a line in her studio (FIG. 20) before dipping it in a different color.⁵¹ Rather than serve as a passive field for drawing, paper became a mobile body that could be bent, turned, and maneuvered in order to channel the ink across its



FIG. 21 *Rice-Paper Drawing [9]*, 1965. Ink on Japanese rice paper. 12 ¼ × 9 inches; 31 × 23 cm

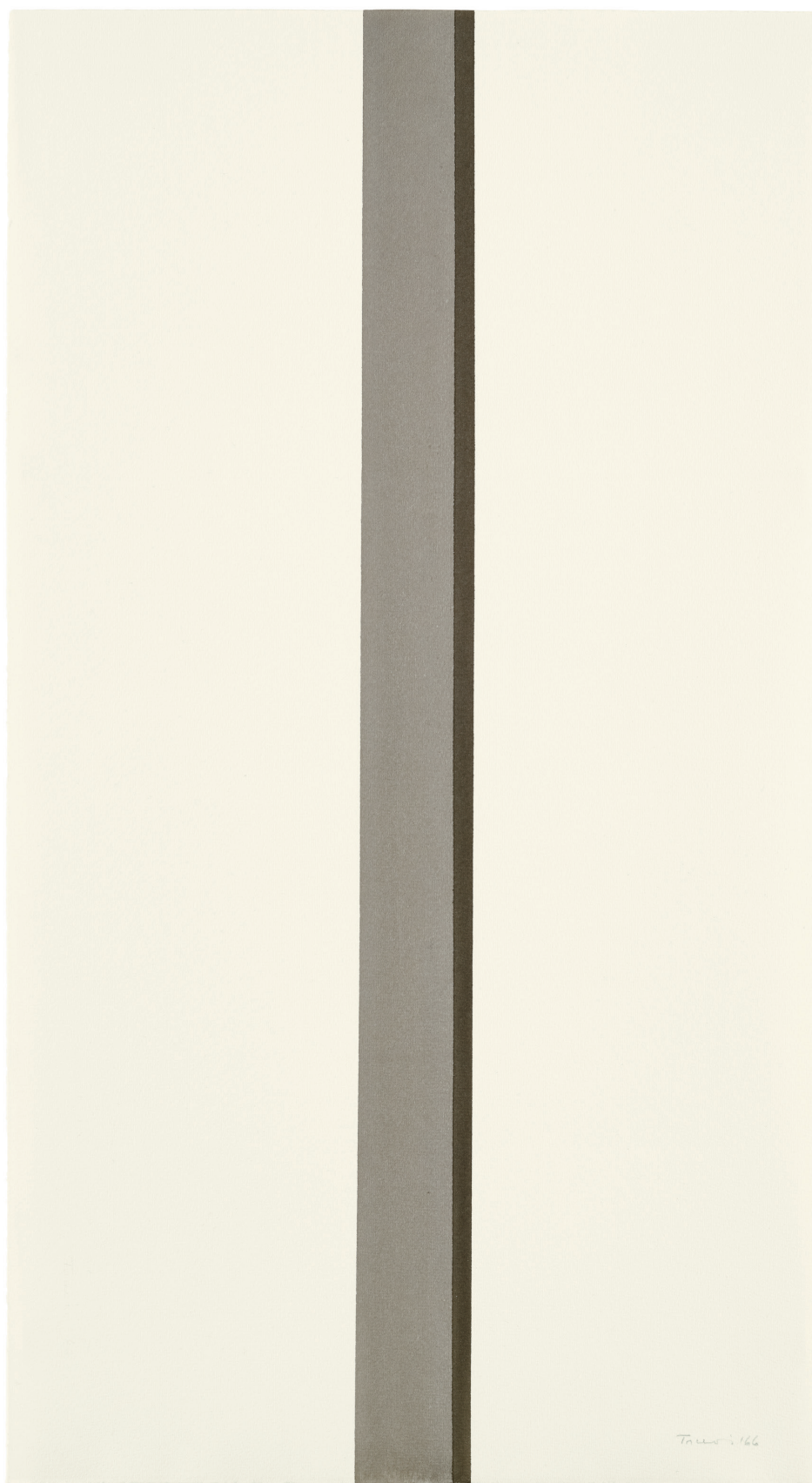


FIG. 22 *Sumi Drawing [1]*, 1966. Sumi ink on paper. 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; 57 x 30 cm

surface. In *Rice-Paper Drawing* [9] (FIG. 21) the rice paper appears to have been soaked in an intense ink the color of fuchsia, over which is layered a veil of indigo on the left-hand side and one of vermillion on the right. These layers become visible toward the center of the page, where the fuchsia ground is revealed at the upper right and the three glazes converge in a rust-colored triangle at the lower left. The overlapping colors and their intersecting edges trace the movement of the paper in Truitt's hands, the ebbs and flows of the ink, and the staggered accumulation of the work.

Truitt's experiments with Japanese materials throughout 1966 also resulted in the *Sumi Drawings*, made in the distinctive jet-black ink typically used in East Asian calligraphy and ink-wash painting. The ink could be watered down to the palest dove gray or mixed with brown ink to create warm sepia tones (FIG. 22). In contrast to the jarring palettes of Truitt's 1965 works on paper, the *Sumi Drawings* are characterized by infinitesimal tonal shifts that gradually emerge and reverberate for the attentive viewer. Truitt later attributed the subtlety of these works to the recalibration of her sense of color in Japan: "One thing that happened with my eyes in Tokyo was that because of living all the time in an absolutely what for me was a colorless land [...] I was able to discern very slight differences in hue and very slight differences in value to a much, much greater degree than I ever had."⁵² Each of the *Sumi Drawings* consists of two adjacent vertical bands of varying tone and thickness, which run clean off the paper's sharp or ragged edge. Erased signatures on some of the drawings reveal that Truitt initially preferred a landscape orientation. By rotating the drawings ninety degrees, she maneuvered them away from the lateral spread of her 1965 works on paper and their perspectival distortions and toward a lucid column reminiscent of Newman's "zips" and her own earlier sculptures *Insurrection* and *Thirtieth* (both 1962). The scintillating verticals of the sumi works also turned forward, toward the columnar format Truitt would resume with her 1967 sculpture *Return* (FIG. 23) after moving back to Washington.

TURNING, RETURNING

The maneuver of the turn is a recurrent trope in Truitt's writings, used to title the second of her published journals. Reflecting on her time in Japan some thirty years later, she used this word to describe her eventual acquiescence to her situation after almost three years of frustration and resistance:

I refused — I rejected and refused — in order to keep myself intact.
But of course I got defeated. I just got defeated. And then also I

turned and saw — something in me turned. [...] So that's the way it all ended in Japan. It ended and I had adjusted. I guess I adjusted. Insofar as I could adjust.⁵³

Truitt's second and last solo show at the Minami Gallery, held from February to March 1967, focused on her works on paper, which were mounted in the Japanese style on thin wooden supports, complementing her use of local materials and techniques (FIGS. 24 & 25). On returning from a solo trip to the United States in January 1967, she felt that she could settle in Japan if necessary.⁵⁴ Shortly after this trip James Truitt expressed his desire to return to Washington, and the couple made plans to leave Japan that summer. The knowledge that she was going home appears to have offered something of a release, triggering a "boom in the studio."⁵⁵ Among the resultant works on paper were a series of drawings exploring variations of a single color, applied with a roller in translucent layers that extend to the edge of the page and reverberate beyond its limits. Truitt later suggested that her sense of color had returned when she was faced with the prospect of going home.

On returning to Washington in June 1967, Truitt abandoned the aluminum sculptures she had been making in Japan, returning to familiar wood and Liquitex in what she described as another kind of homecoming.⁵⁶ Absent the Japanese sculptures, which she destroyed in 1971, her oeuvre appears to transition seamlessly from the works shown at Emmerich in 1963 to *Return*, with its simple columnar structure and deep pink palette. Yet on closer inspection the legacy of her time in Japan is visible throughout her subsequent work, from the graphite lines and white acrylic of the *Arundel* paintings (1973–99) and *Stone South* drawings (1974–78), to the penumbral transitions of *Twilight Fold* (1971) and the vibrant glazes of *River Rose* (1979). Moreover, her Japanese sojourn precipitated a fundamental shift in her worldview, as indicated by a map she tacked up next to her desk toward the end of her time in Japan. Where she had once sought comfort in the gridded streets of Easton, Truitt now gazed upon Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Map as a reminder to herself that "nothing is necessarily what it seems to be."⁵⁷ A fractured surface transformed by folding into a continuous polyhedron, Fuller's map subjected the Earth to endless reorientation and reconfiguration. Folding distance into proximity, rupture into continuity, the past into present (and from there into the future), this origami planet forms an appropriate post-script to Truitt's destabilizing yet transformative period in Japan.

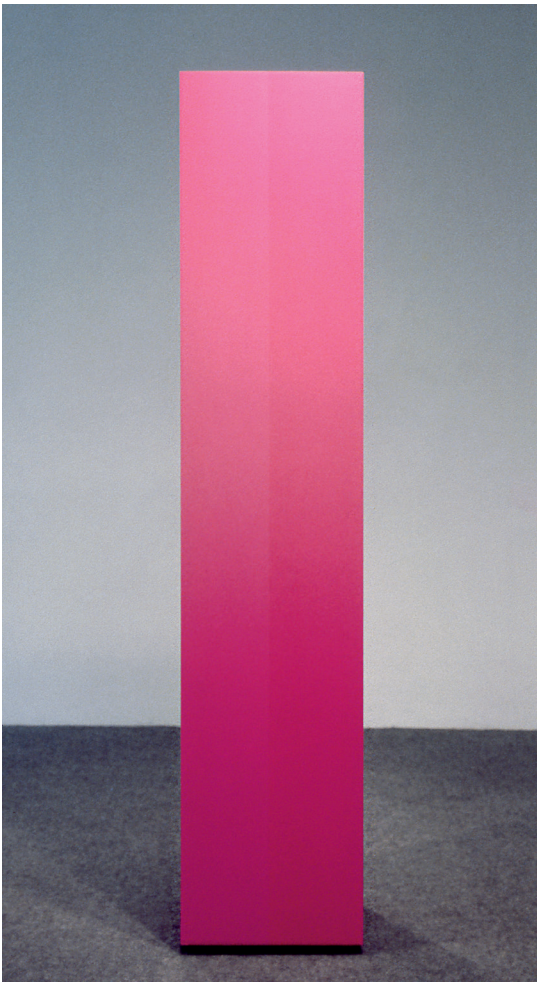
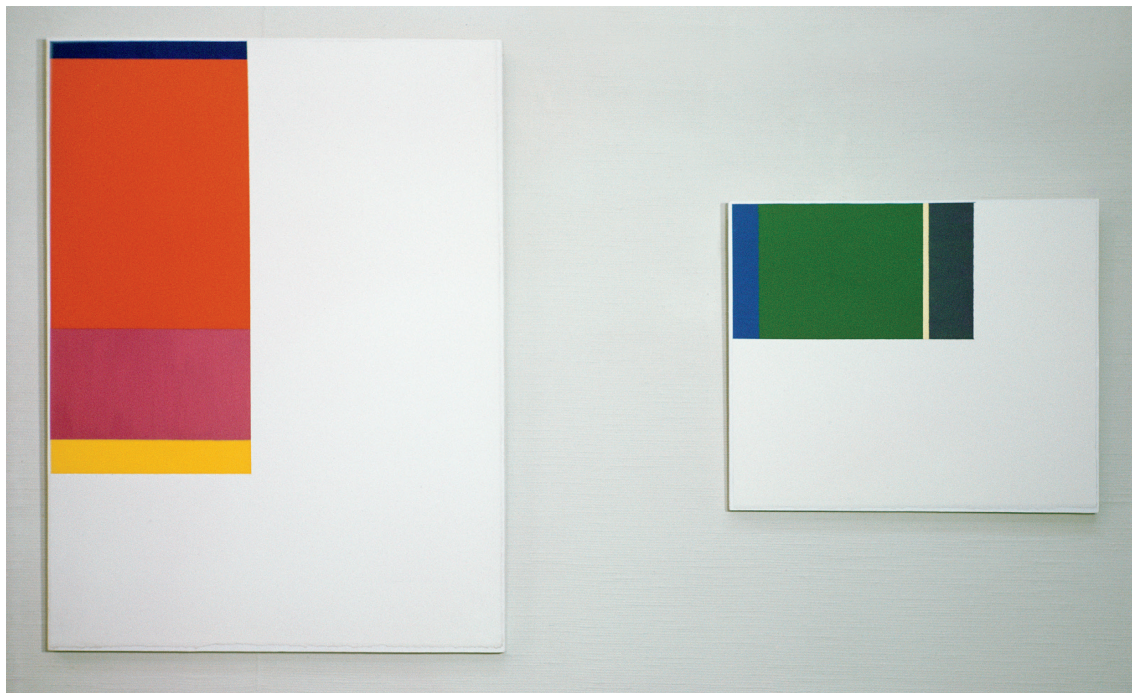
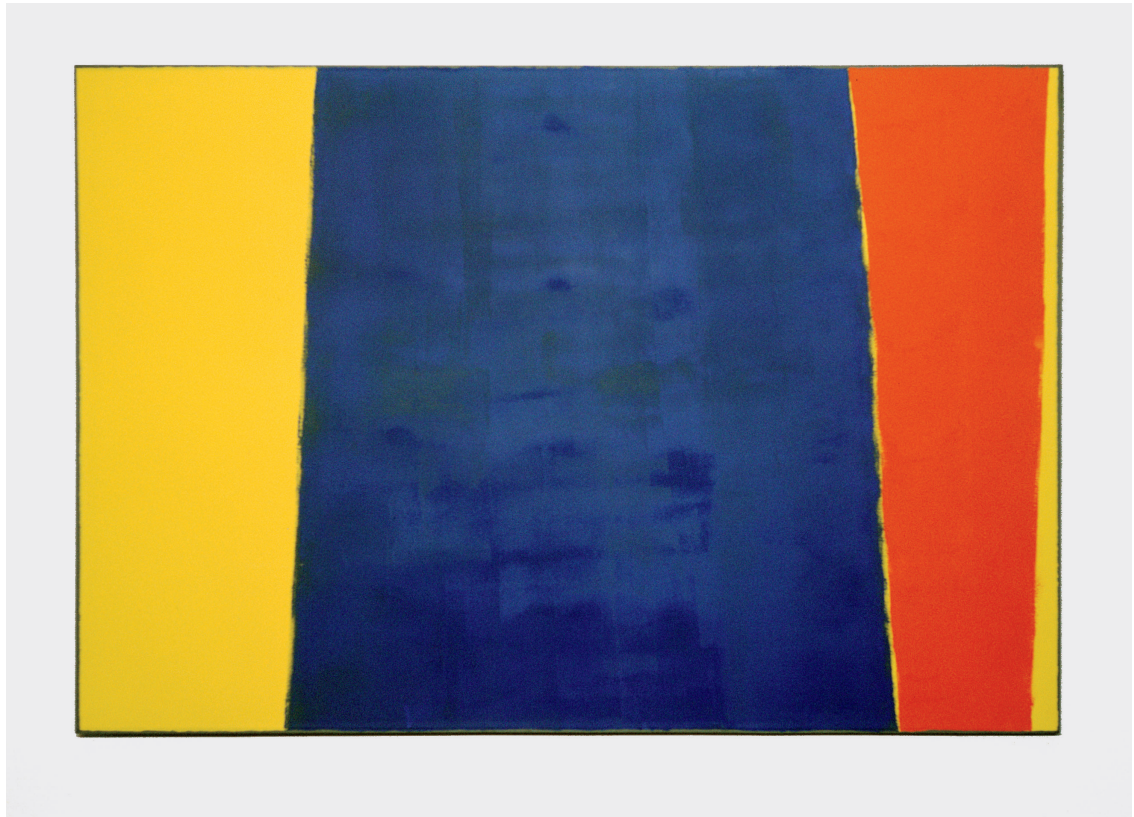


FIG. 23 *Return*, 1967. Acrylic on wood. 84 × 18 × 18 inches; 213 × 18 × 18 cm. Photographed at André Emmerich Gallery, New York, c. 1968



FIGS. 24 & 25 Clockwise from top: *Truit '67 [7]* (1967), *Truit '67 [1]* (1967), and *Truit '66 [31]* (1966) in the exhibition "Anne Truitt 1967" at Minami Gallery, Tokyo, 1967

NOTES

1. Anne Truitt, *Daybook: The Journal of an Artist* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), p. 37.
2. I say “permanently” because, although Truitt lived in Japan for only three years, she later wrote, “I lost forever a whole methodology of living, including my faith in forming such a methodology.” (Truitt, *Daybook*, p. 39.)
3. Truitt identified the source of *First* and much of her subsequent sculpture in the architecture and topography of her hometown in Easton, Maryland: “The whole landscape of my childhood flooded into my inner eye: plain white clapboard fences and houses, barns, solitary trees in flat fields, all set in the wide winding tidewaters around Easton.” Truitt, *Prospect: The Journey of an Artist* (New York: Scribner, 1996), p. 20. On the role of memory in Truitt’s sculpture see James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 63–74.
4. Truitt’s visit to the Guggenheim and this subsequent chain of events are recounted in Truitt, *Prospect*, pp. 19–23.
5. Emmerich was in Washington for Morris Louis’s funeral and had been informed about Truitt’s work by Noland, who became a steadfast supporter of Truitt after she took his life-drawing class at Catholic University in Washington in 1953.
6. Clement Greenberg, “Anne Truitt: Changer” (1968), republished in Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol. 4: Modernism with a Vengeance 1957–1969*, ed. John O’Brien (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 290. Greenberg’s observation was a backhanded compliment. As one of Minimal art’s foremost detractors, he sought to undermine its originality at the risk of misrepresenting the work of Truitt, which he admired. As Donald Judd noted, however, both he and Dan Flavin had exhibited recognizably Minimalist work in the weeks preceding Truitt’s exhibition. See Donald Judd, “Complaints I” (1969), reprinted in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959–1975* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 2005), p. 198.
7. Anne Louise Bayly, “Oral History Interview with Anne Truitt, April–August 2002,” Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
8. As Truitt recounted, “I could have divorced my husband then and taken my children to New York, et cetera, et cetera. I mean, I could have gone in an egoistic direction, instead of which I didn’t.” Truitt in Bayly.
9. Truitt in Bayly.
10. Anne Truitt Audio Archives, 1997–2001, © 2015 The Estate of Anne Truitt, South Salem, New York.
11. In her second memoir, *Turn*, Truitt wrote, “I returned from Japan when I was forty-six. That year worked such a turn in my life that I remember all that I felt before it through the prism of all that I have learned since.” Truitt, *Turn: The Journey of an Artist* (New York: Penguin, 1986), p. 190.
12. Truitt, *Daybook*, p. 119. In a later series of working drawings, Truitt aligned the four sides of her sculptures with the points of the compass.
13. James Meyer, “The Bicycle,” in Kristen Hileman, *Anne Truitt: Perception and Reflection* (London: D. Giles/Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2009), pp. 48–63.
14. In a lecture for Yale University in February 1976, Truitt remarked, “[In Tokyo], I discovered my own personal dependence on placement. Thrust by circumstances into a totally alien environment, [...] I lost touch with myself. Deprived of my own inner certainty, I was forced to use my head to make my work. That is, I no longer enjoyed the effortless flow of intuitive insights which had sustained me from 1961 to 1964. Almost immediately, the spirit of the art faltered and dropped.” Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 19, Folder 4.
15. Truitt in Bayly.
16. Arthur Koestler, “For Better or Worse: Her Course Is Set,” *Life* (Sept. 11, 1964), p. 67.
17. Meyer, “The Bicycle,” p. 58.
18. For more on this cartographic rearticulation, see Michio Hayashi, “Tracing the Graphic in Postwar Japanese Art,” in Doryun Chong, *Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012), pp. 94–119.
19. Doryun Chong, “Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde” in Chong, p. 27.
20. Meyer, “The Bicycle,” p. 56.
21. Anne M. Wagner, “The Threshold: Language and Vision in the Art of Anne Truitt,” in *Anne Truitt: Threshold* (New York: Matthew Marks Gallery, 2013), p. 11.
22. Truitt later recalled, “There were few street signs, and these I ignored in order to enjoy learning how it all pieced together; in the beginning, I rode in taxis looking out the back window so I could identify my return route. Once routes were established, they formed sections, and these sections finally connected. I devised a web for myself of intertwining, crooked, and elusive roads in which I could live. Yet I never came to feel at home in Japan, hard as I tried. I simply felt incorrectly placed.” *Daybook*, pp. 32–33.
23. Notes written by the artist on July 15, 1987. Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 11, Folder 1.
24. Truitt, *Daybook*, p. 38.
25. “At the beginning I used any material other people used, like clay or cement. But finally I found that aluminum is most fitting for me. I have done with wood, too [sic]. Aluminum is easiest for me to express what I want. In Tokyo I have to find an aluminum factory and look for the materials and welding machines.” Interview with Truitt in the *Asahi Shimbun* (March 22, 1964).
26. In 1976 Truitt said, “I don’t work at all by sketches. I never do sketches. Never. I make drawings, but the drawings are absolute, so to speak. Very, very rarely do I make any sort of sketch. Although I do sometimes when I’m working with color, which can be a very long process for me.” “Anne Truitt Interviewed by Howard Fox,” *Sun & Moon: A Quarterly of Literature & Art* no. 1 (Winter 1976), p. 41.
27. Truitt’s working drawing for the piece confirms that each side is welded to the base at an angle of 91 degrees, a small but significant variation on the perpendicular lines of her columnar sculptures. While the base of the sculpture is 18 inches square, the top is 20 inches square.
28. Truitt, note dated March 18, 1965.
29. Truitt, note dated April 6, 1965.
30. “Anne Truitt Interviewed by Howard Fox,” p. 49.
31. Truitt quoted in Victoria Dawson, “Anne Truitt, the Color of Truth,” cited in Meyer, “The Bicycle,” p. 53.
32. Meyer, “The Bicycle,” p. 60.
33. Edward Said, “Reflections on Exile,” in Said, *Reflections on Exile* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 173–86. Although she was theoretically free to return home, Truitt used the word “exile” to describe her time in Japan. Anne Truitt Audio Archives, 1997–2001, © 2015 The Estate of Anne Truitt, South Salem, New York.
34. Meyer identifies the irregular pointed roof of the Meeting House as one of several condensed sources for *First* in “The Bicycle,” p. 58.
35. In 1953 Truitt assisted her friend C. J. Richards in a French to English translation of Germaine Brée’s book *Marcel Proust and Deliverance from Time*.
36. Said, p. 148.
37. In an unsent letter to Greenberg dated November 8, 1965, Truitt wrote, “I can feel my life turning in some large new cycle, moving away emotionally in a great swing from the

past which it has been so busy coordinating and tabulating and trying to understand for the past few years. Particularly since the past was cut so sharply — and cruelly as I experienced it — from the present when I came to Japan. My instinct is that I may never again feel the past as clearly as I do now."

38. Anne Truitt, letter to André Emmerich, June 20, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 14, Folder 7.

39. Anne Truitt Audio Archives, 1997–2001, © 2015 The Estate of Anne Truitt, South Salem, New York.

40. Clement Greenberg letter to Truitt, June 18, 1966. Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 1.

41. Clement Greenberg, "American-Type Painting" (1955), reprinted in Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (New York: Beacon, 1965), p. 220.

42. See Max Kozloff, "American Painting During the Cold War," *Artforum* (May 1973), pp. 43–54, and Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum* (June 1974), pp. 39–41.

43. In 1967, Greenberg wrote, "It was hard to tell whether the success of Truitt's best works was primarily sculptural or pictorial, but part of their success consisted precisely in making that question irrelevant." Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," (1967) reprinted in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol. 4*, p. 255. His dismissal of Truitt's Japanese sculptures is therefore surprising, since the colored bands and flat surfaces of these sculptures approach the concerns of abstract painting, such as Kenneth Noland's "chevron" series (a point made by Meyer in "The Bicycle," p. 59).

44. See, e.g., Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

45. Lawrence Campbell, "Reviews and Previews: Anne Truitt," *ARTnews*, vol. 64, no. 2 (April 1965), p. 14.

46. Truitt in Bayly. Although she explored replacing the ship paint with Liquitex, the iron-oxide undercoat required to cover aluminum had a flattening effect that she disliked.

47. Truitt in Bayly.

48. Truitt, note dated March 23, 1965.

49. Truitt in Bayly.

50. Truitt, *Daybook*, p. 9.

51. Anne Truitt Audio Archives, 1997–2001, © 2015 The Estate of Anne Truitt, South Salem, New York.

52. Ibid.

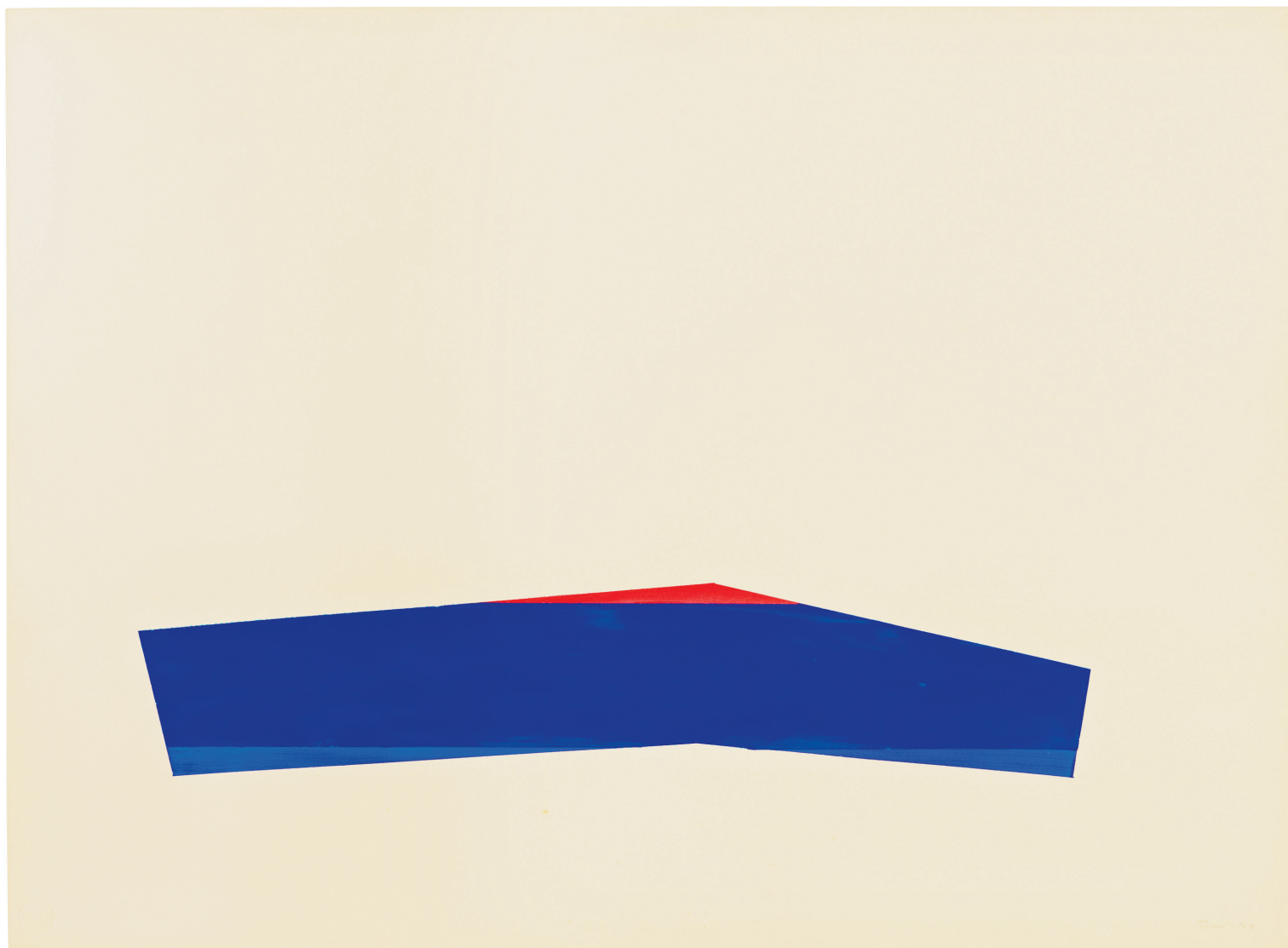
53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, March 13, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.

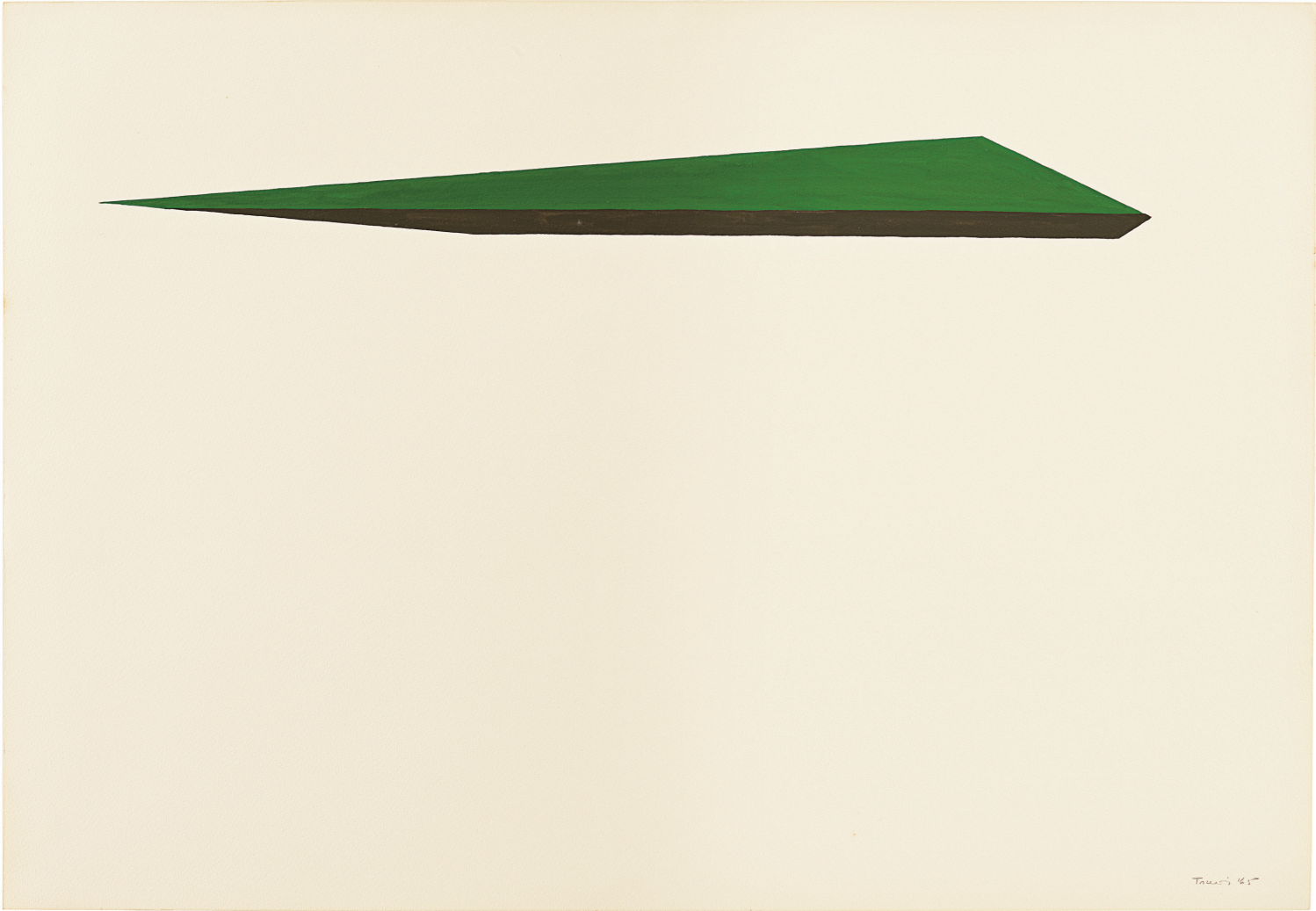
56. Truitt in Bayly: "I just left behind me everything. And I came back on my own soil with my land under my feet — at the right latitude and longitude right, here in Washington — and I began to make my work the way I had before. I made it out of wood. [...] I used my Liquitex and I followed my undercoating pattern."

57. Truitt letter to Louisa Jenkins, November 20, 1966. Truitt had previously written to Jenkins that Byars had lent her one of Buckminster Fuller's books, which mentioned the map. She requested a copy, and Jenkins, who had recently met Fuller, sent it to Truitt with some of his articles.



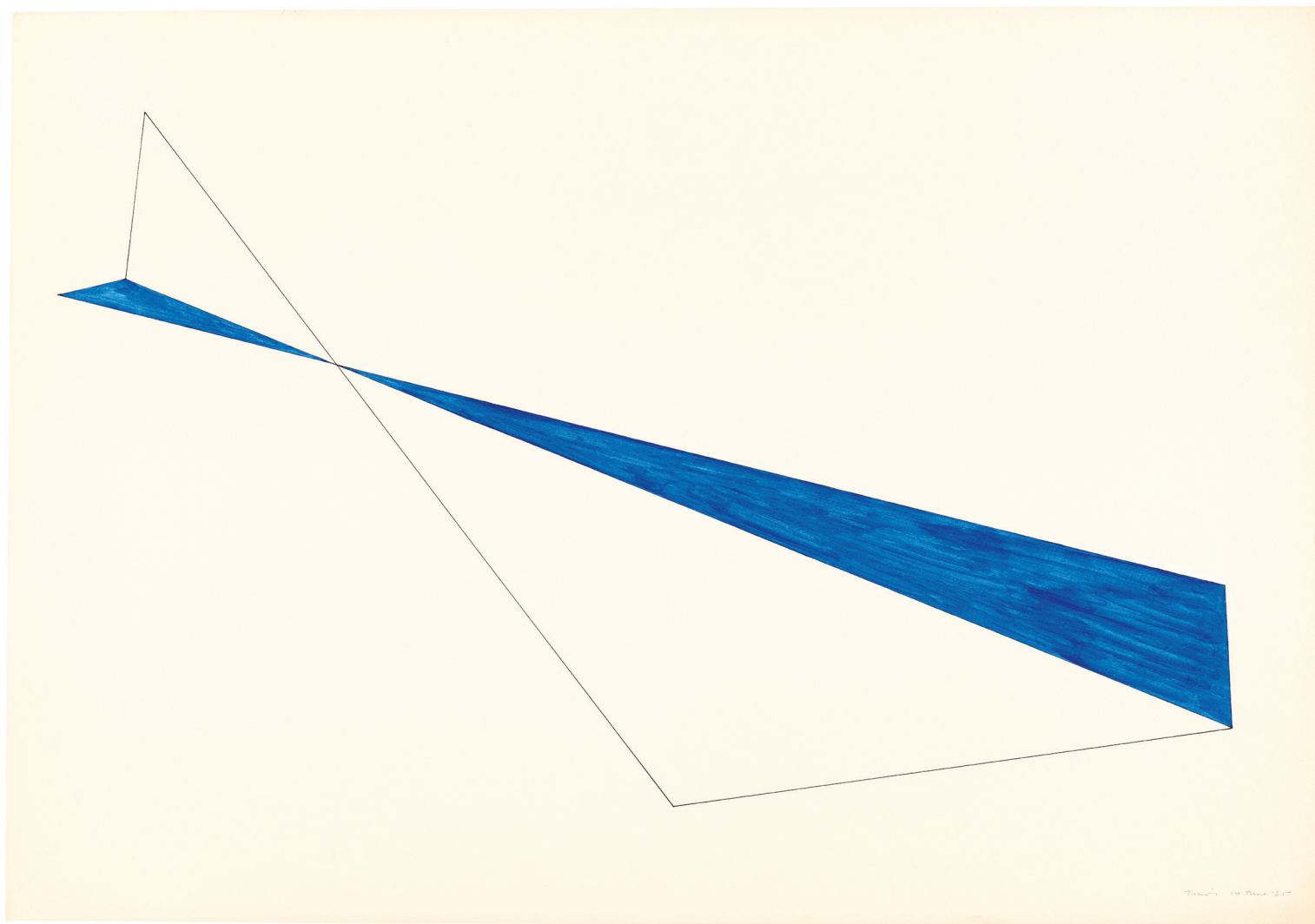


Tamara 20





Tamara 1 April 1965



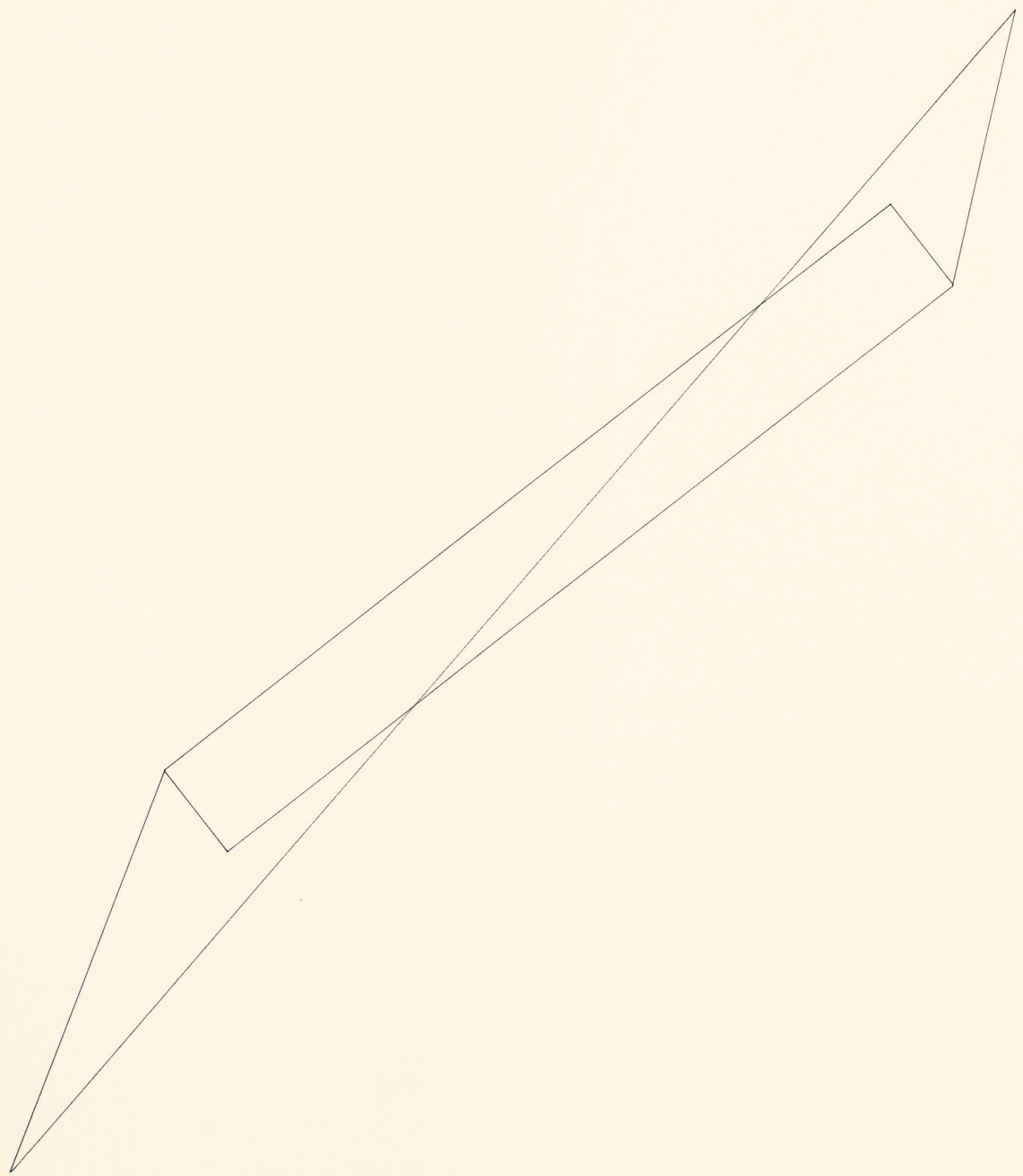
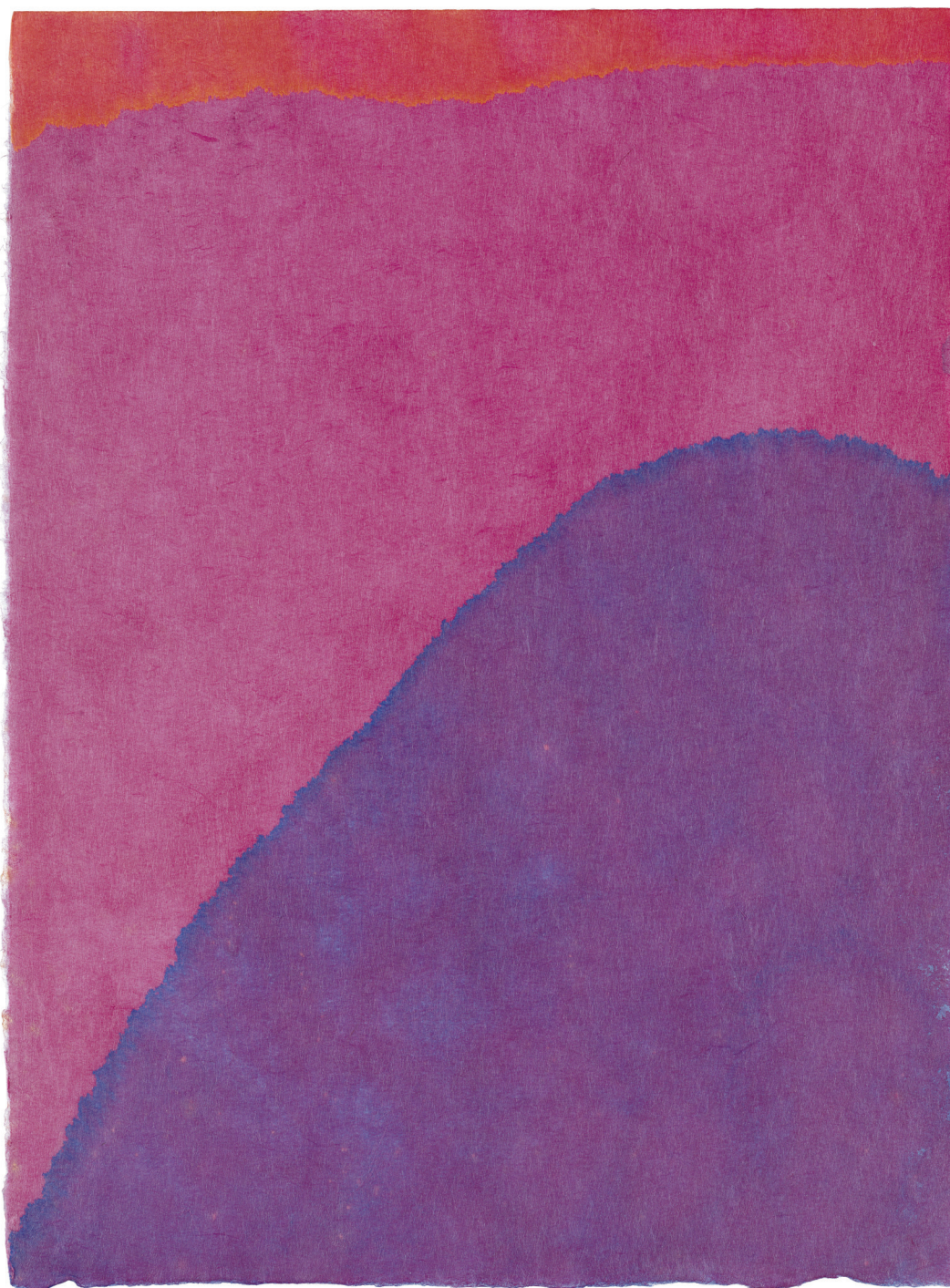


Figure 1. 24 Dec 1911

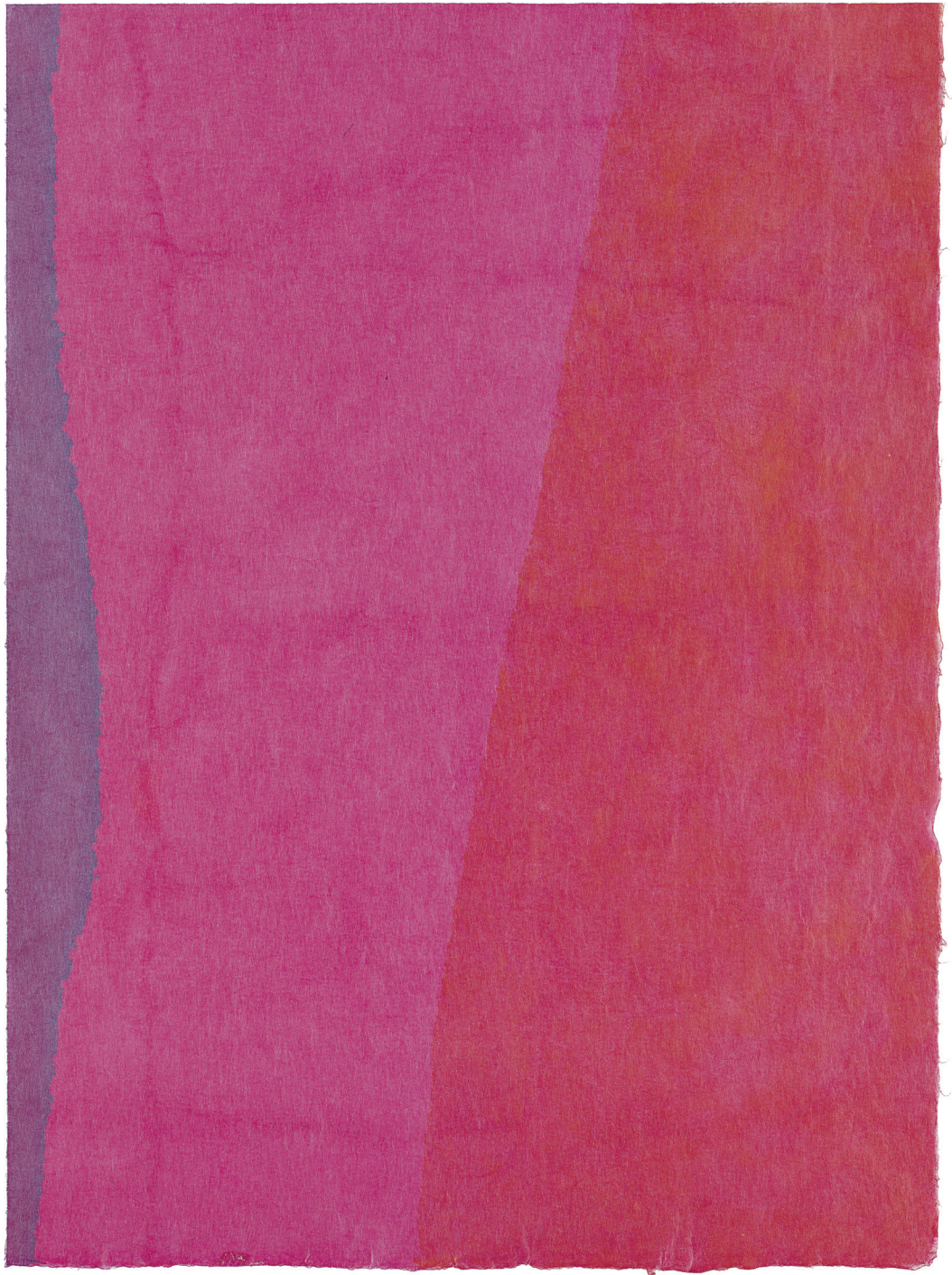


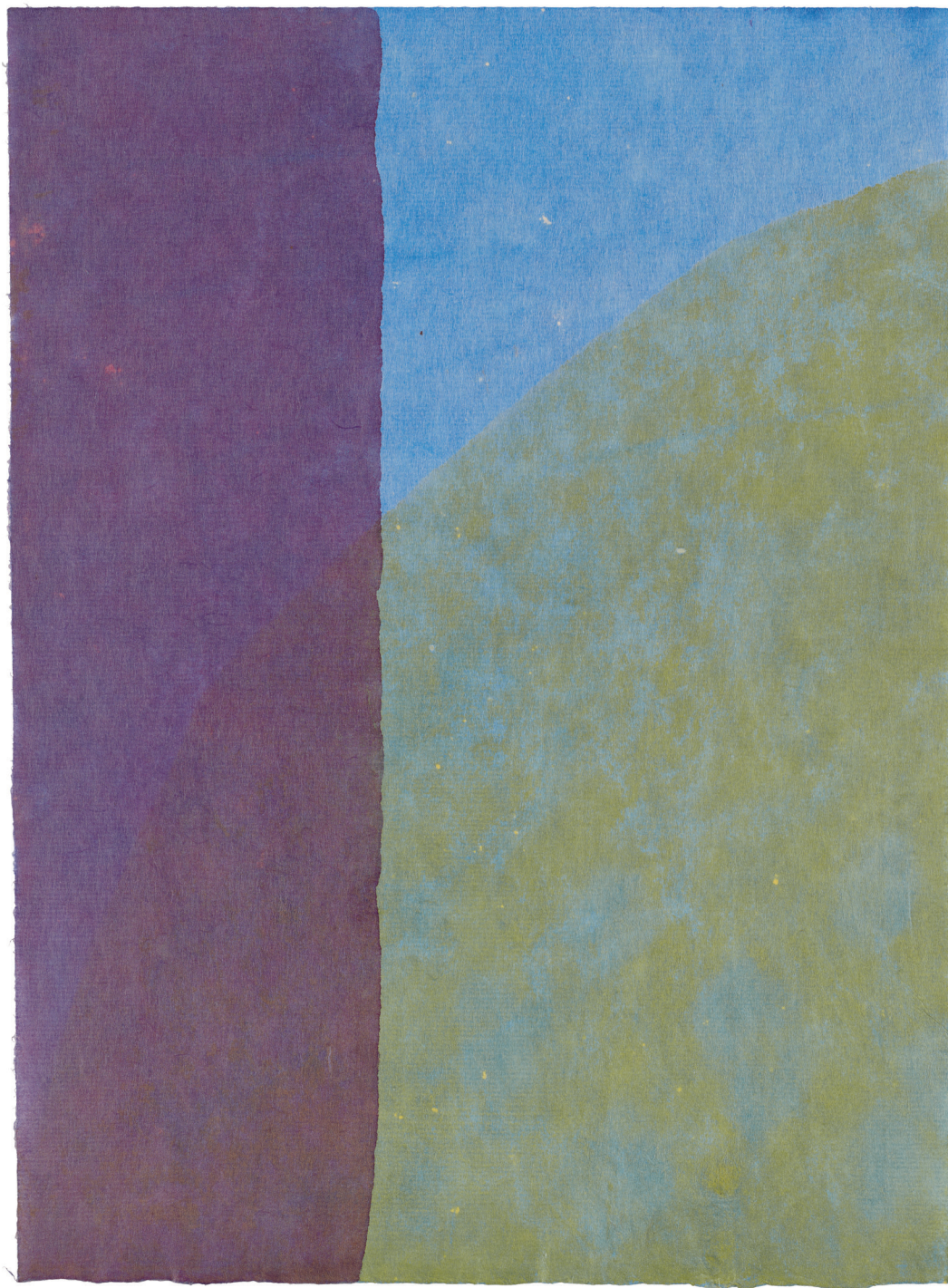


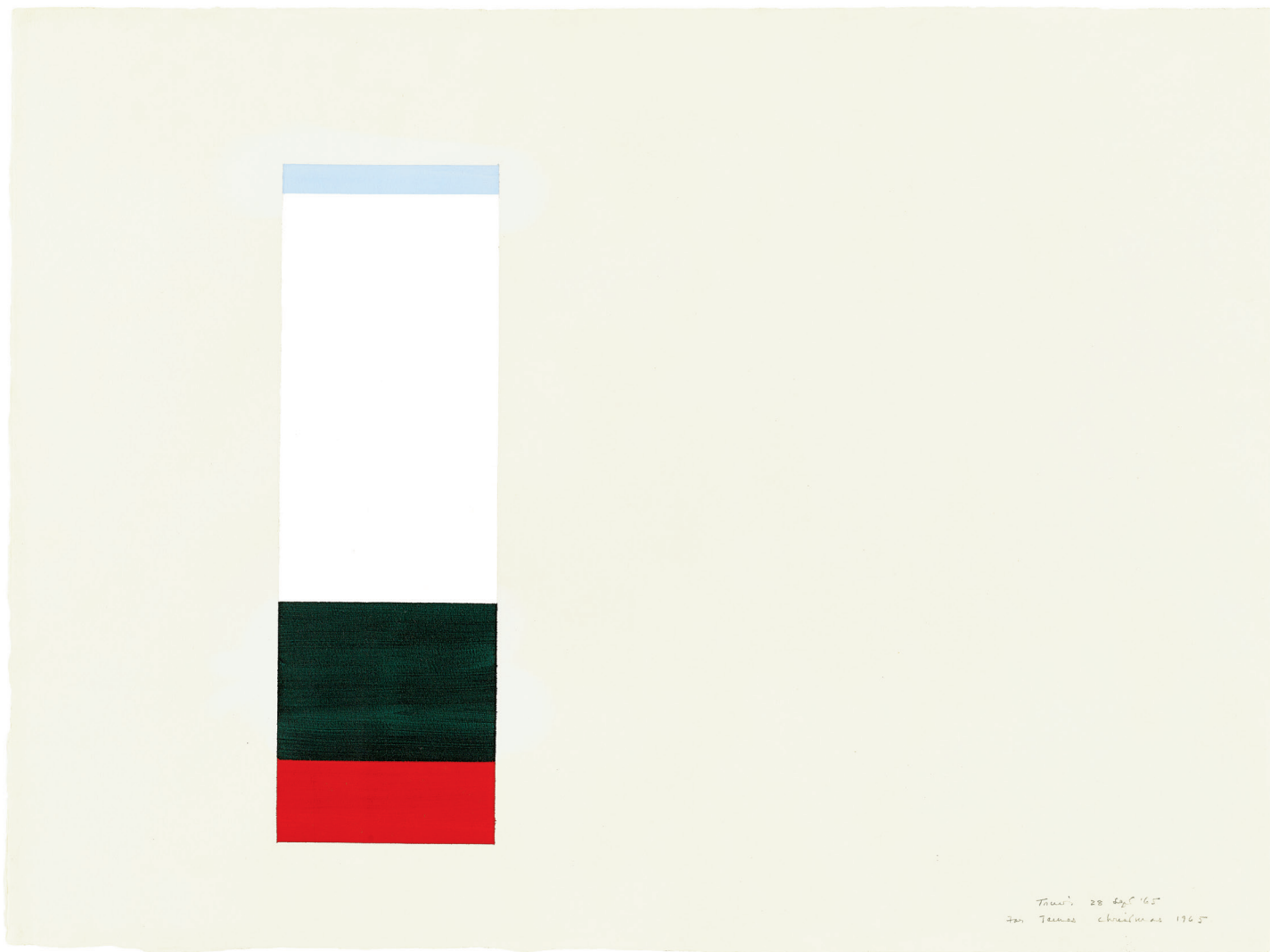


Rice-Paper Drawing [14], 1965. Ink on Japanese rice paper. 12 ¼ × 9 inches; 31 × 23 cm

Rice-Paper Drawing [15], 1965. Ink on Japanese rice paper. 12 ¼ × 9 inches; 31 × 23 cm

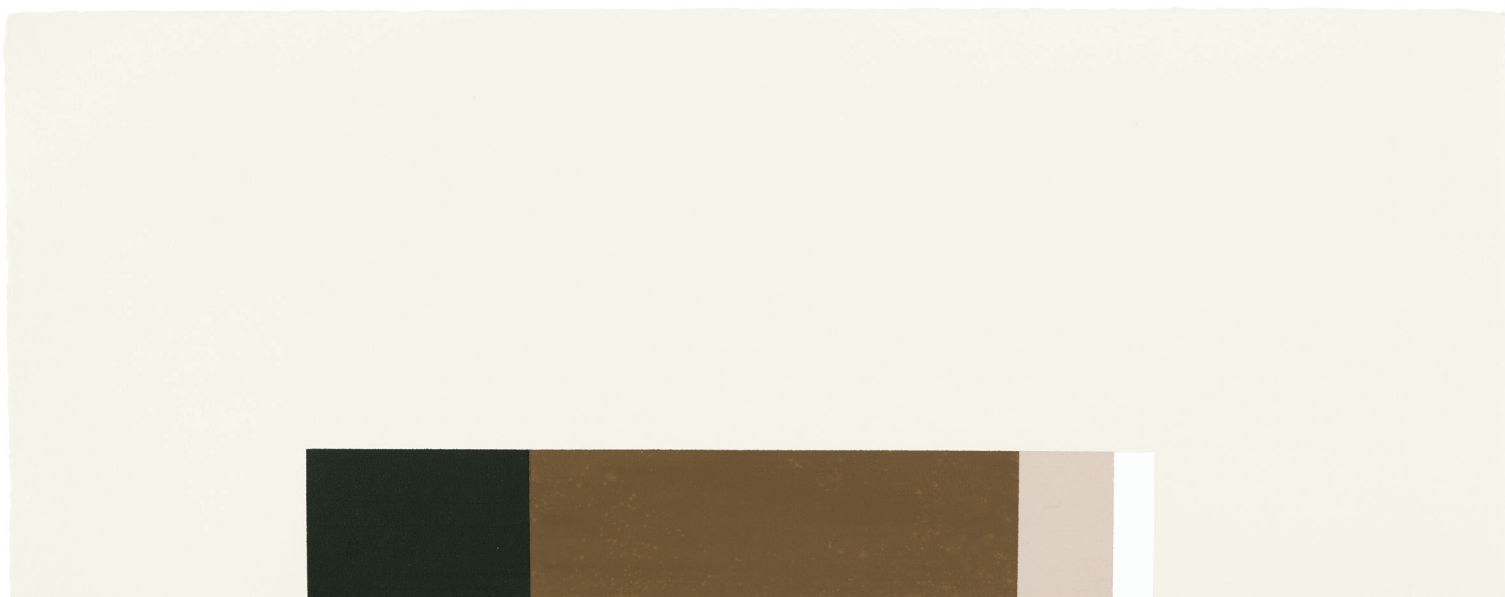






Tom's 28 Apr '62
for James Christmas 1965





Truitt '66 [29], 1966. Acrylic on paper. 11 × 27 ½ inches; 28 × 70 cm

Truitt '66 [34], 1966. Acrylic on paper mounted to panel. 17 ½ × 24 ¾ inches; 45 × 63 cm





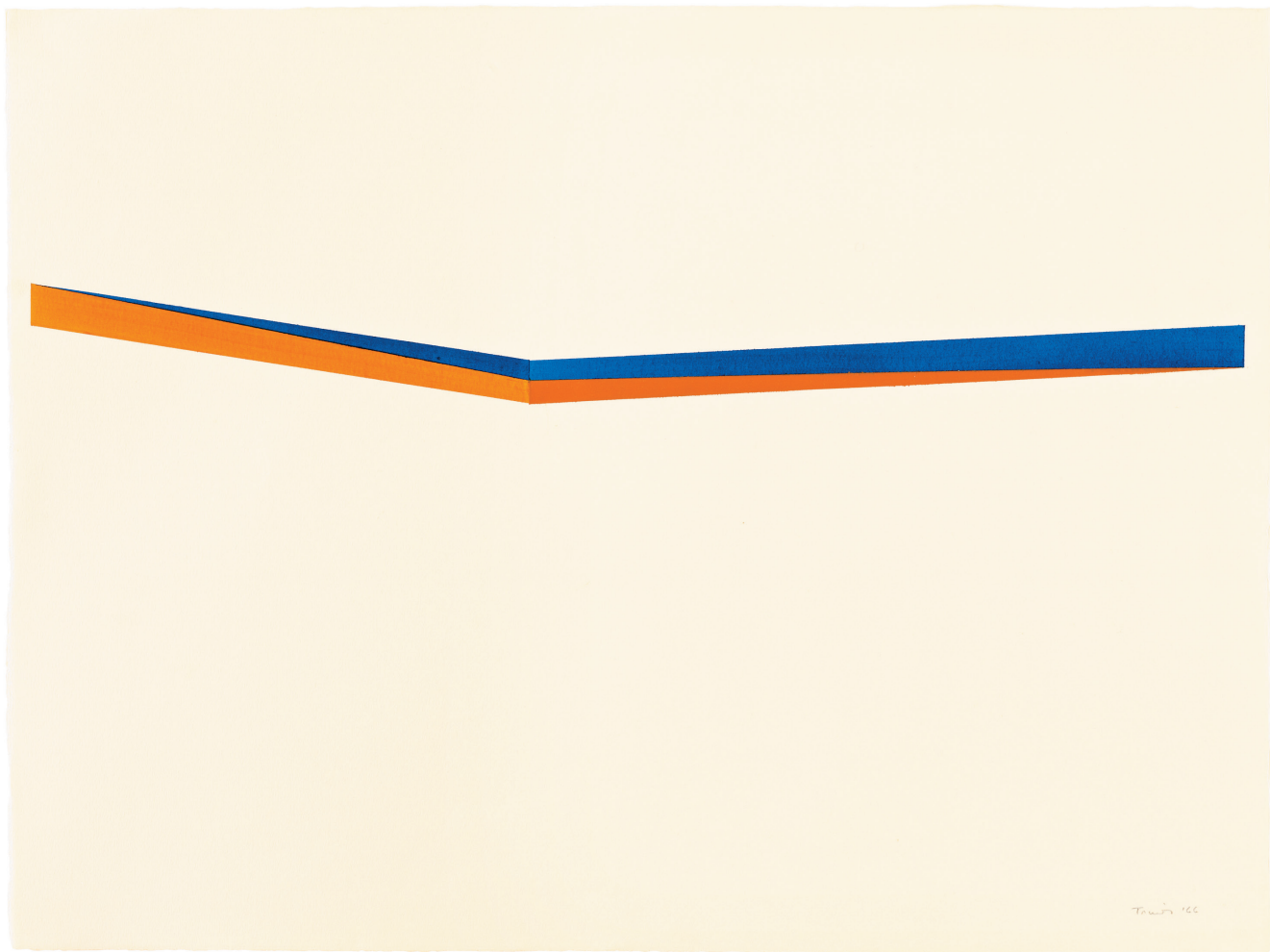
Tower's 19th July 1967

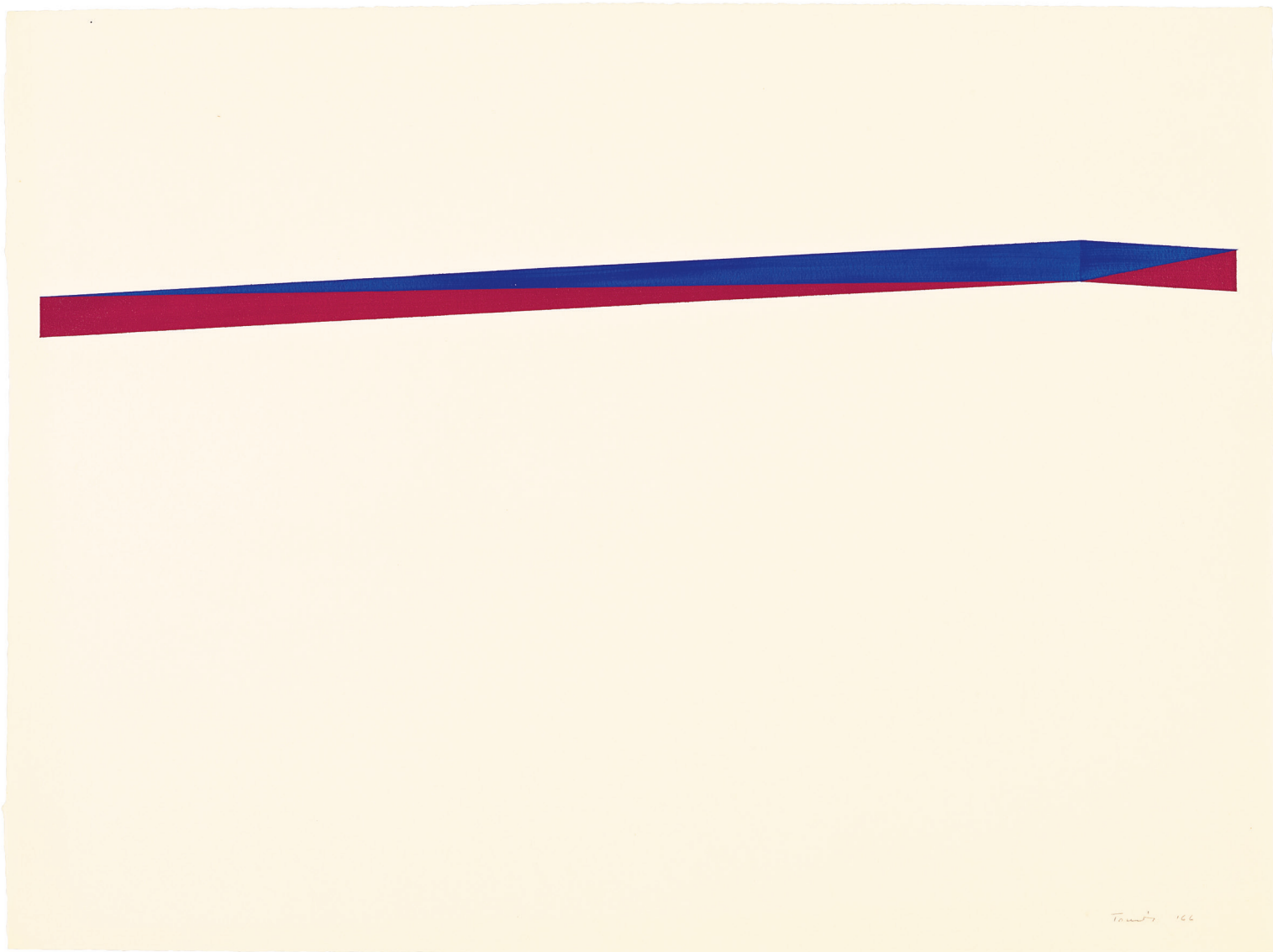




Truitt '66 [10], 1966. Acrylic and graphite on paper. 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; 45 \times 2 cm

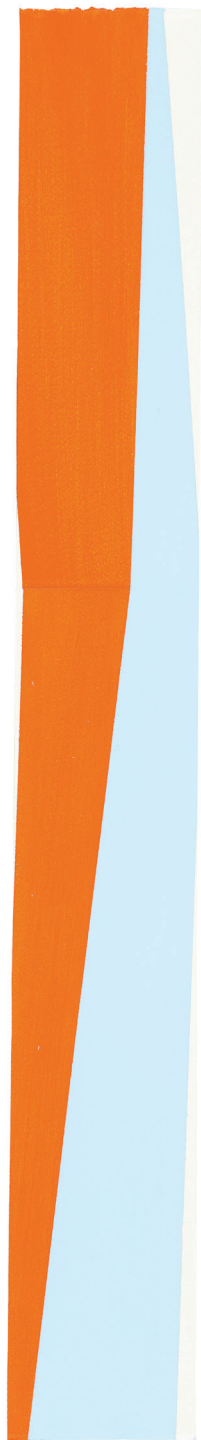
Truitt '66 [1], 1966. Acrylic on paper. 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ \times 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; 52 \times 70 cm





Truitt '66 [4], 1966. Acrylic on paper. 20 ¾ × 27 ½ inches; 53 × 70 cm

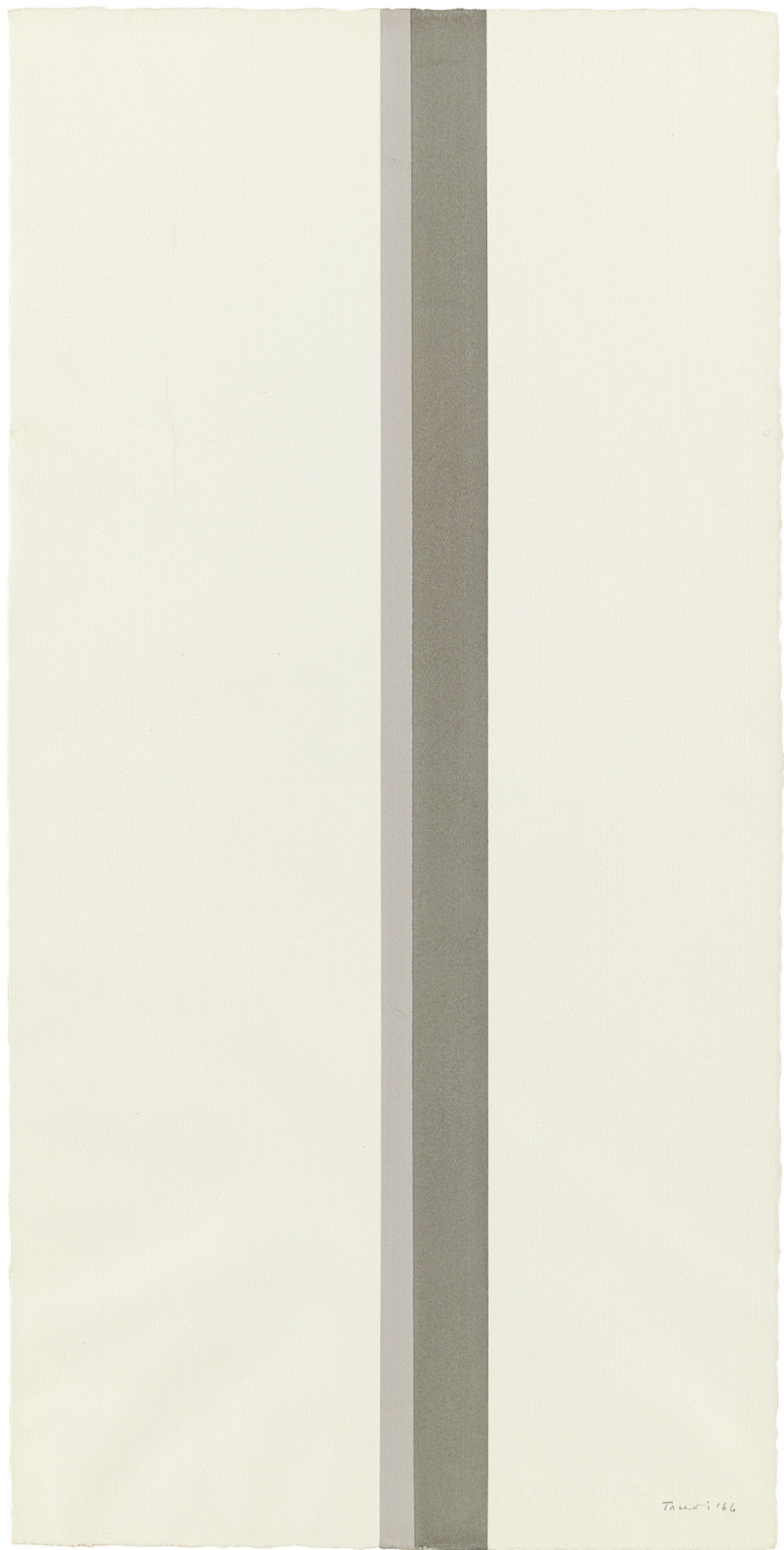
Truitt '66 [11], 1966. Acrylic on paper. 27 ¼ × 3 ⅞ inches; 69 × 8 cm





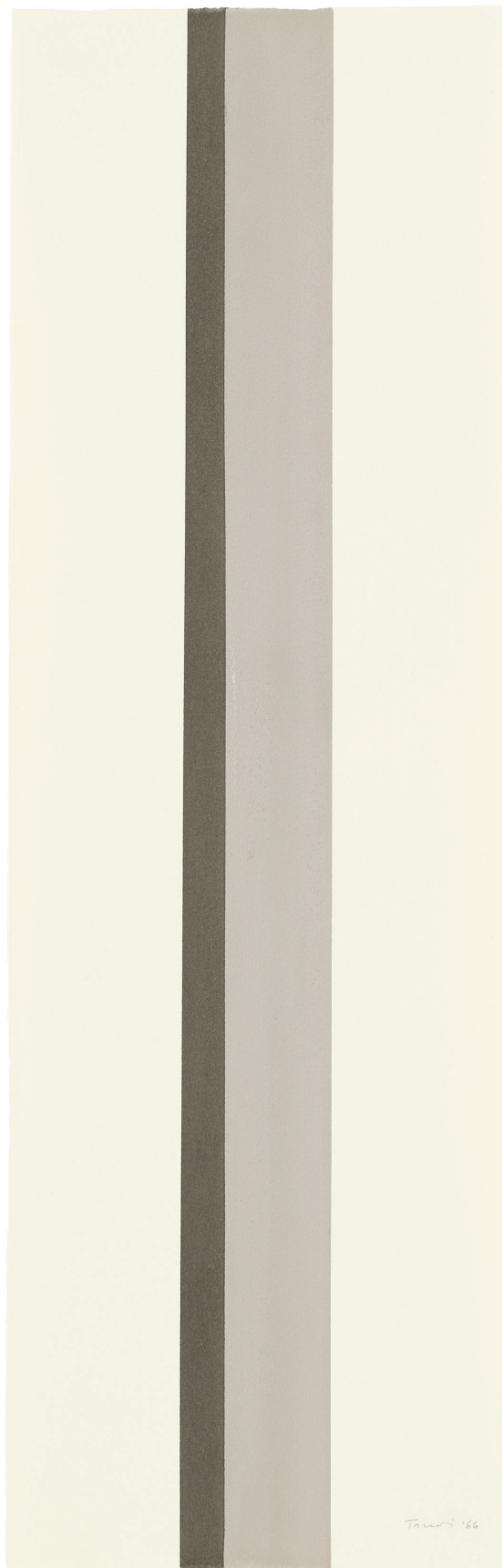
Toussaint '66 [17], 1966. Acrylic and graphite on paper. 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ \times 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; 26 \times 31 cm

Toussaint '66 [15], 1966. Acrylic and graphite on paper. 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ \times 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; 31 \times 13 cm



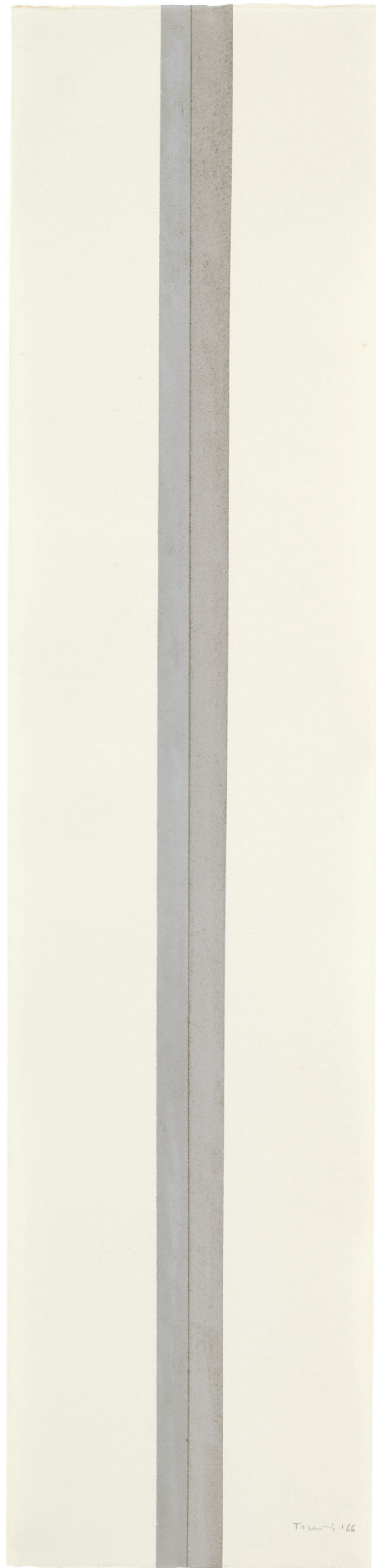


Tauri 166

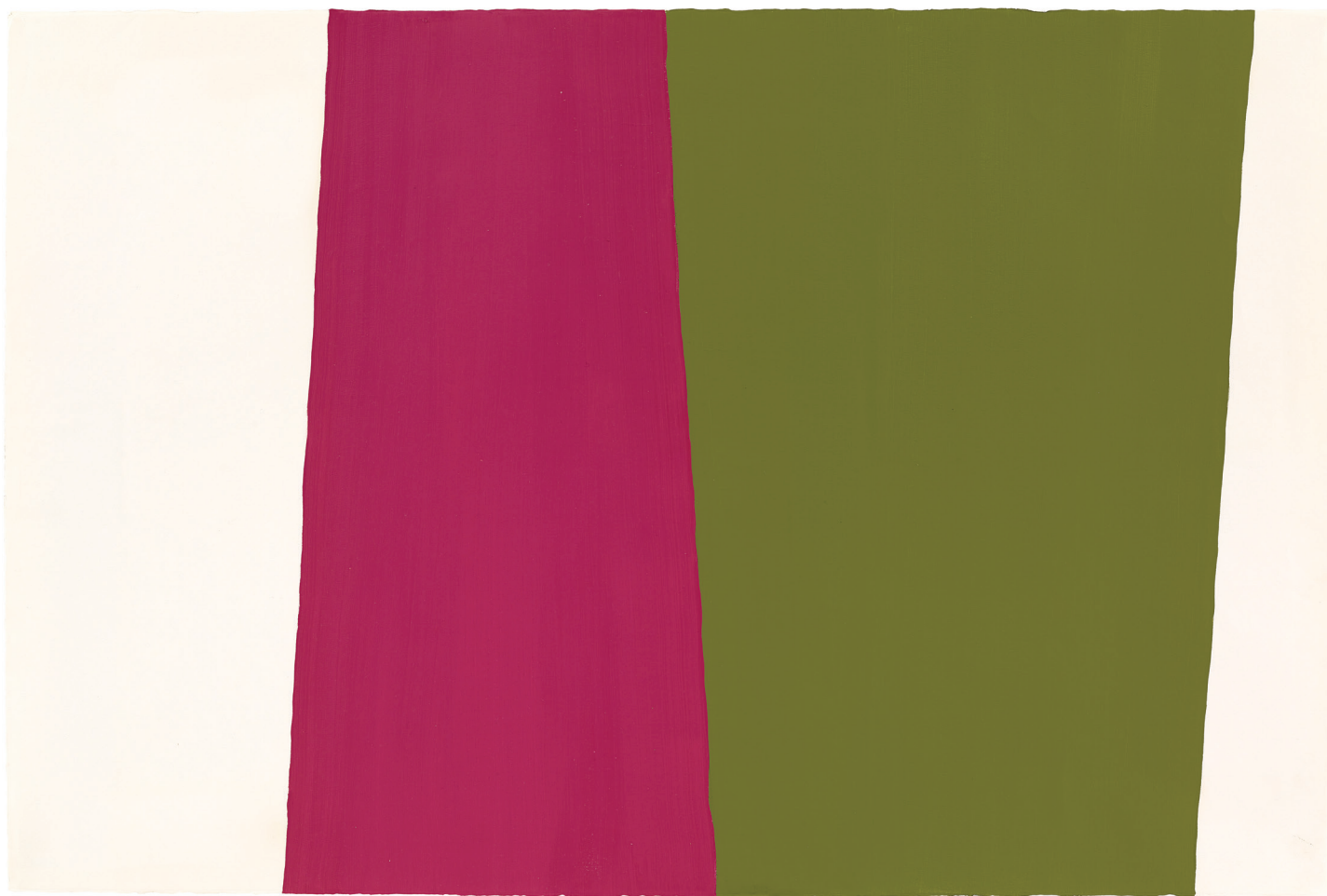


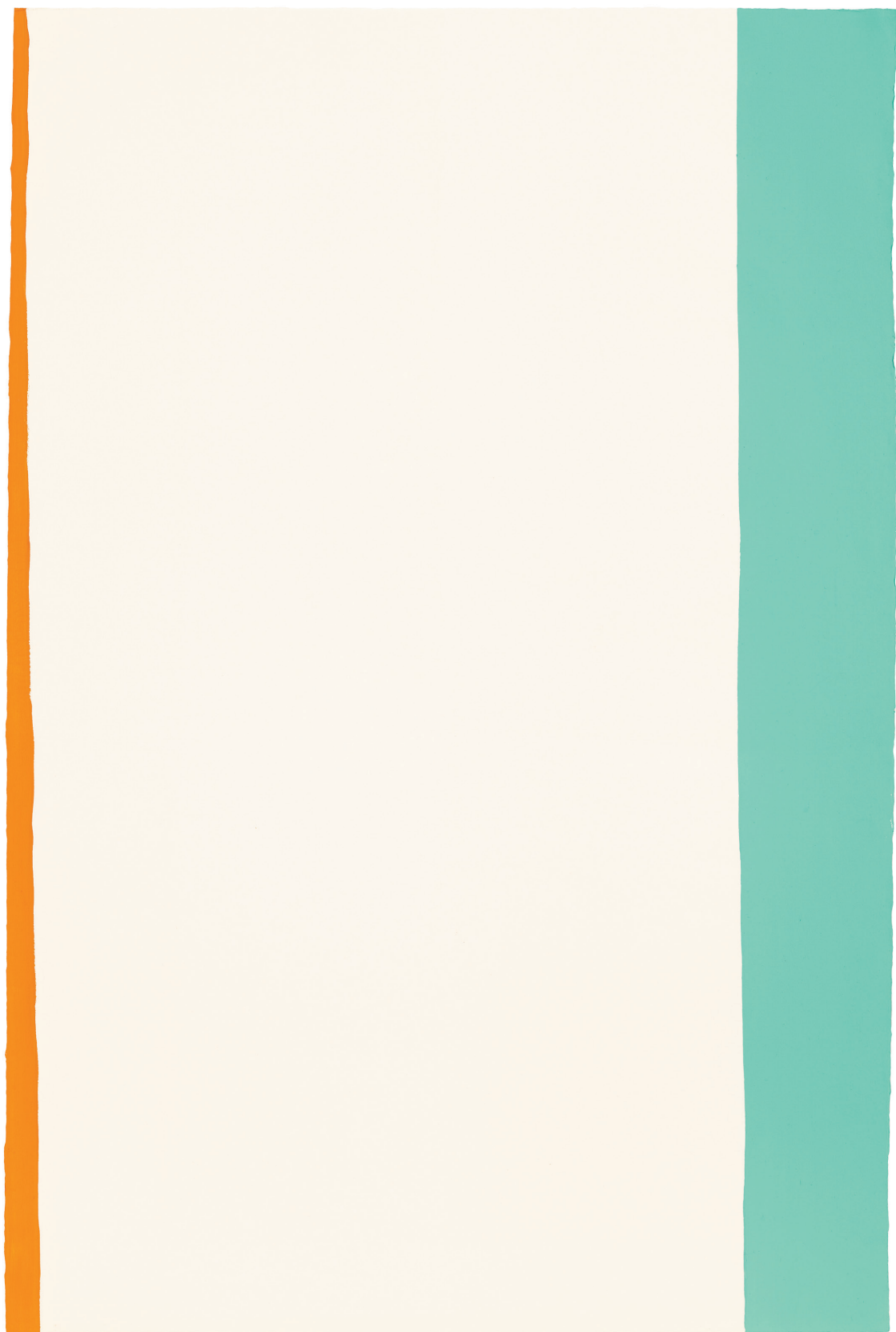
Sumi Drawing [5], 1966. Sumi ink on paper. 27 ¼ × 8 ¾ inches; 69 × 22 cm

Sumi Drawing [2], 1966. Sumi ink on paper. 27 ½ × 6 ½ inches; 70 × 17 cm

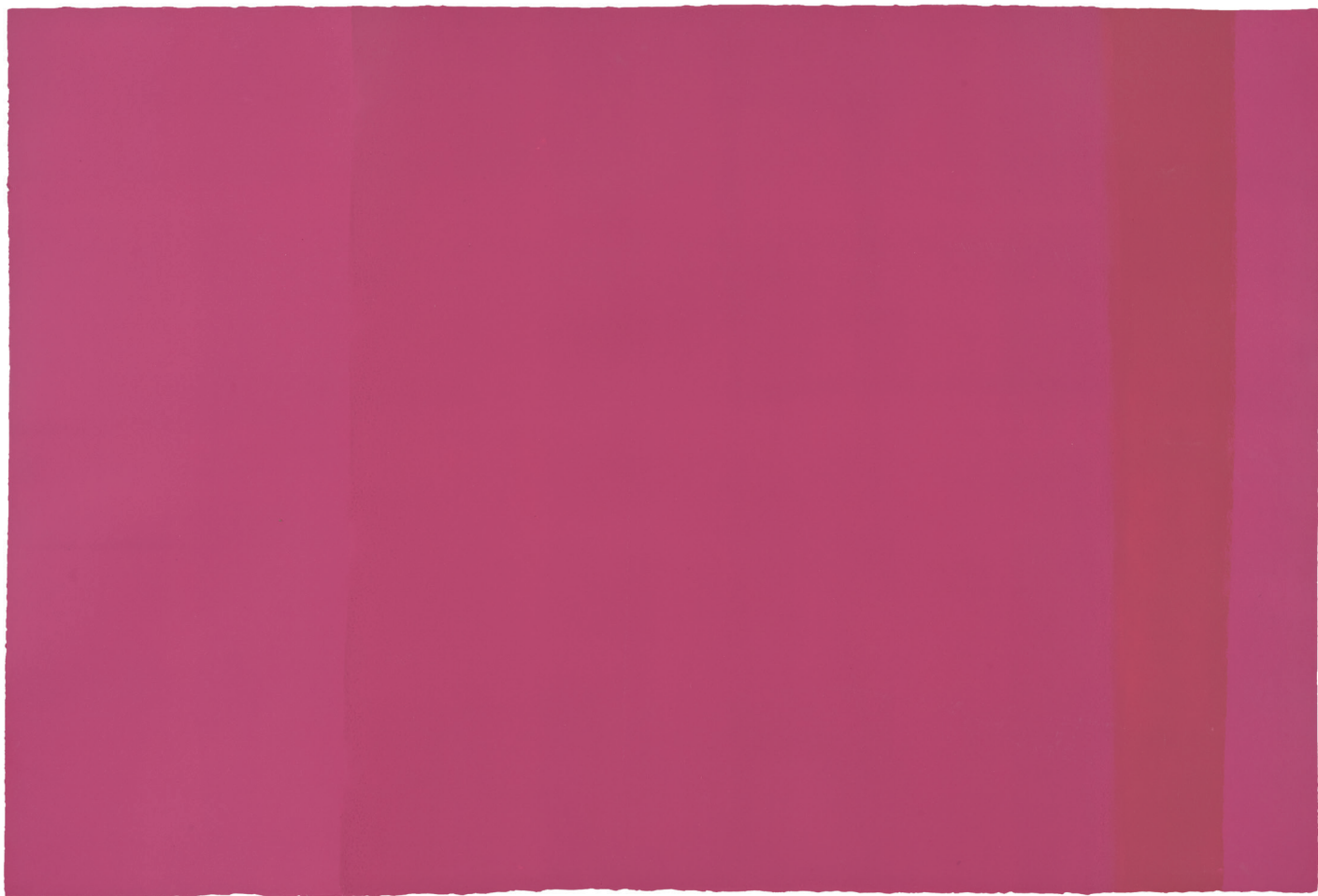


Thomson 186



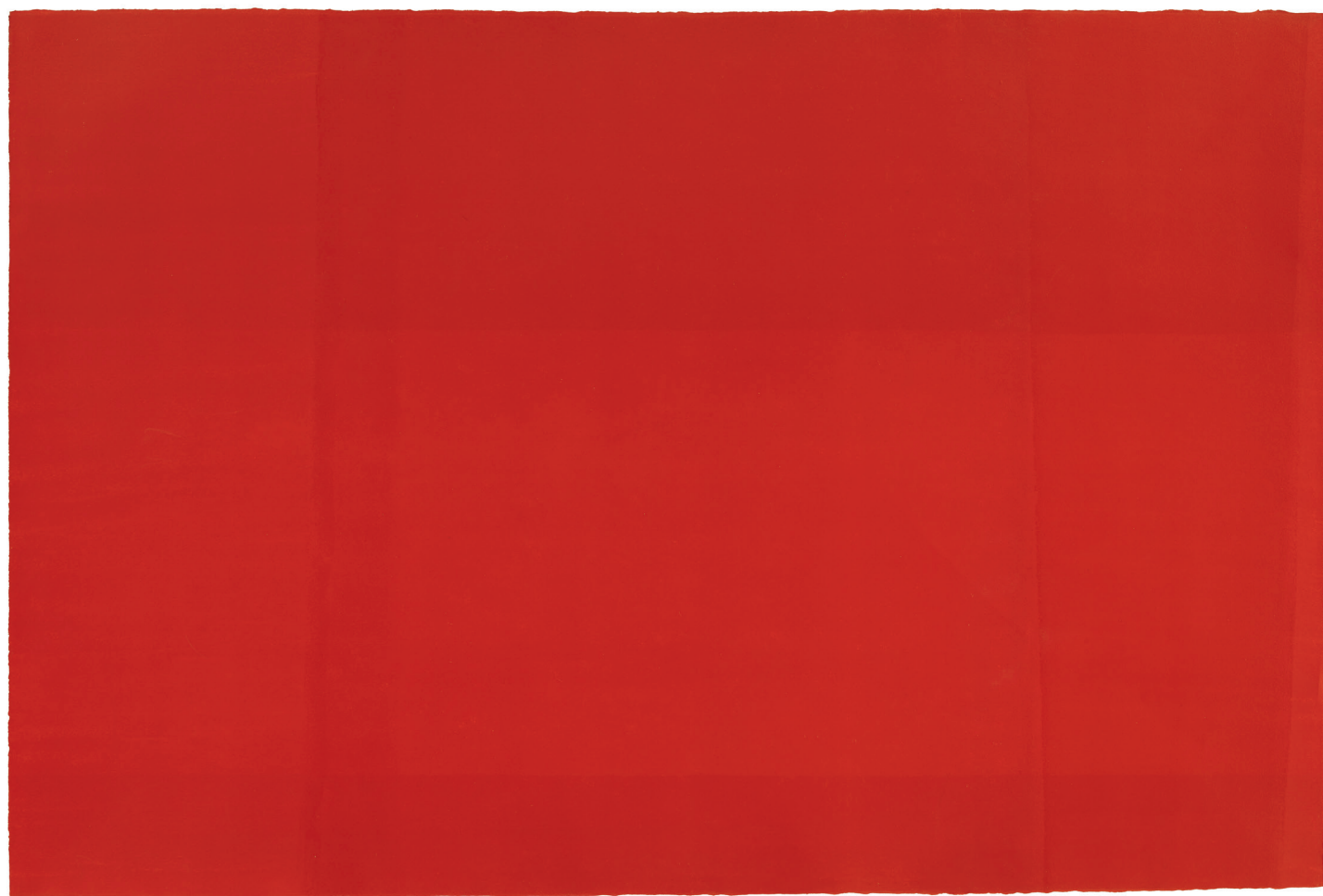






Truitt '67 [20], 1967. Acrylic on paper. 27 ½ × 41 inches; 70 × 104 cm

Truitt '67 [21], 1967. Acrylic on paper. 27 ½ × 41 inches; 70 × 104 cm







CHRONOLOGY

Charles Gute

This chronology intends to provide a historical context for the artworks included in this volume, as well as a reassessment of an important and transitional period in the artist's life. In the arc of Anne Truitt's career her years in Japan have sometimes been overlooked, even dismissed as lost years in which the artist distanced herself from both the art world and what would come to be seen as her signature style.

This misconception hinges at least partly on the fact that Truitt, while reviewing artworks with Walter Hopps for her mid-career retrospectives at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1973–74) and the Corcoran Gallery of Art (1974), decided to destroy every one of her Japan sculptures still in her possession (see *Catalogue of the Japan Sculptures*, pages 138–139 in this volume). Many had never been exhibited; all were made of aluminum, a material Truitt had adopted in Japan but ultimately found unsuited to her aesthetic intentions.

Nonetheless, this process of discovery would be essential to the long-term clarification of Truitt's approach to sculpture, and her work in aluminum would constitute one of several studio innovations she pursued in Japan — many in the form of drawings — that would profoundly inform her lifelong practice. Truitt herself would later comment, "If I had not gone to Japan, I would not know anything. I would not know what is what."¹

The reality is that Truitt's years in Japan were intensely active ones both artistically and intellectually. Culturally displaced and separated from her closest friends and colleagues, Truitt dealt with her sense of isolation by turning inward, immersing herself in her work and methodically stripping away all

but her core artistic concerns. In addition to a remarkably productive studio output, she also returned to writing during this period, in the form of extensive correspondence and freeform reflections on her goals and experiences as an artist — a practice that would eventually grow into her literary works *Daybook* (1982), *Turn* (1986), and *Prospect* (1996).

This chronology is written in the present tense, though later consequences of some events are foreshadowed. Likewise, in order to make thematic connections or to highlight related occurrences, the linear progression is occasionally interrupted by leaps forward or backward in time. Truitt's appointment calendars have been especially important for establishing specific dates and providing a sense of her day-to-day activities and interactions. Major developments in US and world history are included in italics for wider context, as are some historical events that would have been directly relevant to Truitt. In terms of reconstructing a studio timeline, Truitt's rigorous correspondence with Louisa Jenkins has been invaluable, as the two artists wrote at length about their respective practices and often sought each other's technical advice.²

For access to Truitt's datebooks and other materials, this chronology has benefitted from the Anne Truitt Papers at Bryn Mawr College, which includes all her extant correspondence, business records, and writings. Bryn Mawr's library staff — particularly Eric Pumroy, Marianne Hansen, and Patrick Crowley — have been enormously helpful in facilitating this resource. Thanks also to Alexandra Truitt for her insights and unwavering support in the creation of this document.

OPPOSITE Anne Truitt
at the opening of her
exhibition at Minami Gallery,
Tokyo, February 1967

1921

MARCH 16: Born Anne Dean in Baltimore, the artist will spend the first thirteen years of her life in Easton, Maryland, a small town on Chesapeake Bay's eastern shore.

1961

NOVEMBER: During a visit to New York with her longtime friend and artist colleague Mary Meyer, Truitt has her first exposure to works by Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhardt at the Guggenheim Museum's "American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists" exhibition, curated by H. H. Arnason. The encounter will provoke a profound reevaluation of her own art practice. As she will later write in her journal, "I saw that I too had the freedom to make whatever I chose. [...] The tip of balance from the physical to the conceptual in art had set me to thinking about my life in a whole new way."³ On returning to Washington, Truitt begins making sketches for her seminal work *First* (FIG. 1).

1962

JANUARY: Working in a carriage house on Twining Court near Dupont Circle, formerly the studio of Kenneth Noland,⁴ Truitt initiates what will come to be seen as her first major body of work. These signature pieces, comprising more than fifty sculptures and numerous works on paper, reflect a radically new approach to shape, color, scale, and content — especially as compared to the artist's preceding work, much of it figurative and dating as far back as 1948, which she will subsequently abandon or destroy.

SEPTEMBER: Following the death of her colleague Morris Louis on September 7, Truitt's home becomes a meeting point on the day of the funeral. In attendance is New York gallerist André Emmerich, who has heard about Truitt's recent work from David Smith, Kenneth Noland, and Clement Greenberg. On the strength of a brief studio visit, Emmerich offers Truitt a one-person exhibition to take place early the following year.

1963

FEBRUARY 12 TO MARCH 2: Truitt's first one-person exhibition opens at André Emmerich Gallery, 17 East 64th Street, New York. The show is comprised of ten sculptures, all constructed of poplar and hand-painted with acrylic in primarily dark, muted colors (FIG. 26). Visitors to the



FIG. 26 Anne Truitt's first one-person exhibition, André Emmerich Gallery, New York, 1963

exhibition include Richard Bellamy, Helen Frankenthaler, Hilton Kramer, Robert Morris, Robert Ryman, Irving Sandler, Meyer Shapiro, and David Smith. In late February *Newsweek* praises the show, saying the work has the “precision and presence of contemporary architecture.”⁵ Two weeks later the show is reviewed by Jill Johnston in *ARTnews*. The capsule review is mainly descriptive but calls the overall body of work “impressive.”⁶

APRIL: The Emmerich exhibition is reviewed by Michael Fried in *Art International* and Donald Judd in *Arts Magazine*. Fried compares Truitt’s “fine, intelligent work” to that of Ellsworth Kelly and Ad Reinhardt but finds the work lacking on purely formalist grounds.⁷ Judd’s review is more dismissive; he also invokes Reinhardt’s use of color but says the work “looks serious without being so” and suggests that the “arrangement of the boxes is as thoughtless as the tombstones which they resemble.”⁸ Judd will have his first solo show in December of this year.

JUNE: Truitt and her husband James separate temporarily. During a two-month retreat with her children near Traverse City, Michigan, where James’s family has a lakeside cottage, she makes a sketchbook reference to aluminum as a possible material.

AUGUST 3: Truitt family friend and James Truitt’s employer Philip Graham commits suicide. Graham was publisher and co-owner of

The Washington Post and, like James Truitt, a personal friend of John F. Kennedy.

Earlier in the year at a publishing conference in Arizona, Graham, in a possibly manic and/or inebriated state, made public comments revealing Kennedy's affair with (Anne Truitt's longtime friend) Mary Meyer. James Truitt intervened on his friend's behalf by calling the White House and making arrangements for a plane to take Graham back to Washington, where he was committed to psychiatric care.

Following Graham's suicide, ownership of *The Washington Post* will pass to his widow, Katharine Graham, who, in consultation with Washington Bureau Chief Ben Bradlee, will offer James Truitt a new job assignment in Japan.

NOVEMBER 22: *John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas.*

NOVEMBER 25: The Truitts host Thanksgiving dinner. Guests include Anthony and Sheila Caro, Kenneth and Cornelia Noland, Barbara Rose, Frank Stella, and Mary Meyer.

DECEMBER: Working drawings, including a sketch on an envelope postmarked December 1963, establish Truitt's intention to have sculptures fabricated in aluminum.

1964

JANUARY 9: James Truitt accepts a position as Far East Bureau Chief in *Newsweek's* Tokyo office (FIG. 27). A noted American journalist, he previously served for twelve years as deputy chief correspondent for *Life* magazine and as vice president of *The Washington Post* (which acquired *Newsweek* in 1961). He was also publisher of *ARTnews* and the visual arts quarterly *Portfolio*, and a founding trustee of the short-lived Washington Gallery of Modern Art.

During his tenure as Far East Bureau Chief, he will travel extensively throughout Asia, making frequent trips to cover political events in Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Among other notable stories, he will write about the outcast *burakumin* communities at the margins of Japanese society, and will become one of the first Westerners to interview high-level members of the notorious *yakuza* crime syndicate.

JANUARY 10: The group show "Black, White and Gray," often referred to as the first museum exhibition of Minimalist art, opens at the

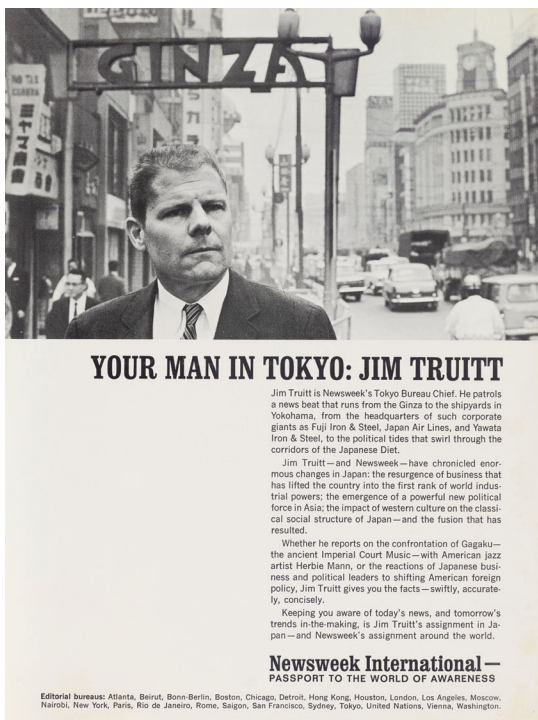


FIG. 27 *Newsweek International* advertisement featuring James Truitt, 1965

Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. Curator Samuel Wagstaff includes three sculptures by Truitt.

JANUARY 11 THROUGH FEBRUARY 29: In addition to informal get-togethers with her friends — including Mary Meyer, CIA official Cord Meyer, Kenneth and Cornelia Noland, and CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton and his wife, the poet and medieval scholar Cicely Angleton — social engagements bring Truitt into contact with Clement Greenberg; Foreign Service officer Lucius Battle and political scientist and lawyer Betty Davis Battle; Ellsworth Kelly; Beverly Pepper; historian Elizabeth Eisenstein and physicist Julian Eisenstein; journalist Walter Lippmann, credited with introducing the concept of cold war; Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Democratic Party activist Philip M. Stern and artist Helen B. Stern; Katharine Graham; Helen Frankenthaler; Just Lunning, president of the Danish design firm Georg Jensen Inc.; and CIA deputy director Gates Lloyd and Eleanor (“Lally”) Lloyd, a founder of the Washington Gallery of Modern Art and longtime chairman of the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania.

FEBRUARY 10 TO 11: Truitt packs her studio. Years later she will reflect on the decision to leave New York at what could be seen as a critical moment in her nascent art career:

Well, in the first place, it was in line with my duty. And in the second place, I gave up so much more than I ever thought that I was going to. I essentially gave up everything that I had built up. As Walter Hopps said to me, “You just turned your back on success.” I was on that funny elevator in New York. [...] And I could have stayed on it and gone up, and I could have divorced my husband then and taken my children to New York, et cetera, et cetera. I mean, I could have gone in an egoistic direction, instead of which I didn’t.

And the result was that those parts of myself which were unnecessary to the artist and had been acquired by the ego — by this sort of energetic, wayward, dominant person who liked to get her own way — those parts were pretty much killed off. So I came home without much of a shell.⁹

MARCH 4: The Truitt family leaves Washington for Tokyo.

MARCH 9 TO MAY 1: In Tokyo the family stays at the Imperial Hotel, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Waiting for Truitt is the first of many “letters” from artist James Lee Byars (1932–1997) (FIG. 28), to whom her



FIG. 28 Letter from James Lee Byars to Anne Truitt, 1964

friend Louisa Jenkins had written a letter of introduction. (Jenkins had met Byars while studying Zen Buddhism at the Daitoku-ji temple in northern Kyoto.) Byars moved to Kyoto in 1958 and was greatly influenced by Japanese culture; in addition to staging shamanistic performances influenced by Noh theater and Shintoism, he also produced printed ephemera and folded paper works that he would frequently distribute to friends and art-world contacts via mail. The elaborate correspondences he sent to Truitt, sometimes as often as once a day, are arguably an extension of his artistic practice. Yet, in keeping with his Zen sensibility, he asked Truitt to discard these letters. She will later recount, “He said, ‘You must throw them all out,’ and I said, ‘No, I’m not going to. If you’re going to send a letter, I’ll keep it.’ So we just agreed, [and he] kept on doing it.”¹⁰

Byars will often stay with the Triutts on his visits to Tokyo. She will come to think of him as a “devoted friend,” later describing him as “the only person in all of Japan I found with whom I could really talk. He was compatible. Mad — quite mad — but compatible.”¹¹

MARCH 13: Truitt is interviewed for the *Asahi Shimbun*, Japan’s largest national daily newspaper. In the article, which is published March 22, she is unequivocal about her intention to work in aluminum: “At the beginning I used any material other people used, like clay or cement. But finally I

found that aluminum is most fitting for me. I have [worked] with wood, too. Aluminum is easiest for me to express what I want. In Tokyo I have to find an aluminum factory and look for the materials and welding machines.”¹²

APRIL 29: The Truitt family attends a public celebration at the Imperial Palace, signing the traditional greeting book provided on the occasion of Emperor Hirohito’s birthday. Crossing a bridge in Hibiya Park, Truitt has a sighting that will resonate for years:

I gazed down and in the still black moat that curved between the slant of steep, lichened, ancient stone walls saw many large strong carp, elaborately patterned clear scarlet, white, pale lemon, salmon. Among them I saw with a leaping heart one that was magnificent. Sinuous, dignified, it moved among the others with slow sure power. Its scales were all pure green-gold, glistening. During the years we lived in Japan I returned over and over in the ever-defeated hope that I would see this mysterious creature again.¹³

Much later she will reflect on her feelings of profound emotional detachment in this foreign landscape: “Had it not been for a golden fish, I might not have survived.”

MAY 5: Truitt meets with Sam Francis, who has a studio in Tokyo and is a part-time resident. (His third and fourth wives were Japanese.) Francis works with Minami Gallery in Tokyo — he first showed there in 1961 — and, in addition to James Lee Byars, is one of the few artists working in Japan with whom Truitt is in regular contact.

JUNE: With an introduction from André Emmerich, Truitt meets Kusuo Shimizu, owner of Minami Gallery. It is one of the only galleries in Tokyo showing work by Western contemporary artists, including Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and other artists associated with Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. With Shimizu’s help, Truitt secures a three-month residency in one of three studios reserved for foreign artists at the Japan Artists’ Center building in Ginza. Truitt is given a workspace formerly occupied by Jasper Johns.

JUNE 30: Cut aluminum components for the sculptures *Here, Out, Down*, and *Back* are delivered to Truitt’s studio for assembly and surface treatment. Unlike her previous wood pieces, which were undercoated with multiple layers of white Liquitex acrylic gesso, the aluminum surfaces are to be sealed with a yellow iron oxide undercoating typically used for painting ships. This she covers with marine paint from the Nippon Paint Company in colors she mixes herself.

SEPTEMBER: Following her Japan Artists' Center residency, and after months of searching, Truitt locates a new studio at no. 8, 1-Chome Otowacho, Bunkyo-ku. She will occupy this studio for the rest of her time in Japan. It consists of two small rooms adjacent to a structure occupied by the Hattori family, with windows she is able to remove so that her sculptures can be moved in and out. She will later write, "I learned a lot in that studio about the life of the Japanese, as it was an alley somehow missed by the WWII bombing, [...] a strange alley — tiny wooden houses inhabited by working people — who saw that I worked too and somehow made a little place for me in the fabric of their daily lives. [...] Japanese men used the alley as a secluded, relatively, place to urinate privately. A humble place, in which I learned increasingly to be humble myself."¹⁴

In the months to follow, Truitt will continue working on an assortment of enclosed polyhedral forms assembled from aluminum sheeting. Some of them will become increasingly complex in terms of overall form and color composition. Unlike the right-angled construction of her earlier columnar sculptures, many of these new forms incorporate acute and obtuse angles, and to this end Truitt begins making paper maquettes and laying out forms on graph paper. Additionally, acrylic-on-paper preparatory drawings for these works reveal certain shapes and surface designs to be derived from a process in which small compositions are isolated within larger geometric forms. For example, one drawing shows sculptural forms as excerpts from an overall *X* shape, with colored areas within the smaller forms determined by the negative and positive spaces of the larger form (FIG. 29). In this way, the smaller form functions as a kind of visual synecdoche, using the part to express a larger contiguous whole.

She will use a similarly synecdotal approach in a series of drawings that, while not dedicated studies per se, share a strong visual affinity with the more brightly colored, asymmetrical sculptures that she will develop in aluminum. In these works on paper, she first creates an overall composition of hard-edged geometric shapes rendered in two or more acrylic colors, and then cuts the sheet into narrow rectilinear strips. These strips become discrete drawings in themselves, to be displayed either horizontally or vertically (PAGES 59-60). Once again, the isolated excerpt contains the logic of a compositional whole, though for the viewer this connection is largely intuitive. Although studio photographs suggest that at least some of the initial full-sheet compositions were executed during this period, the drawings will not be cropped and finalized until 1966.

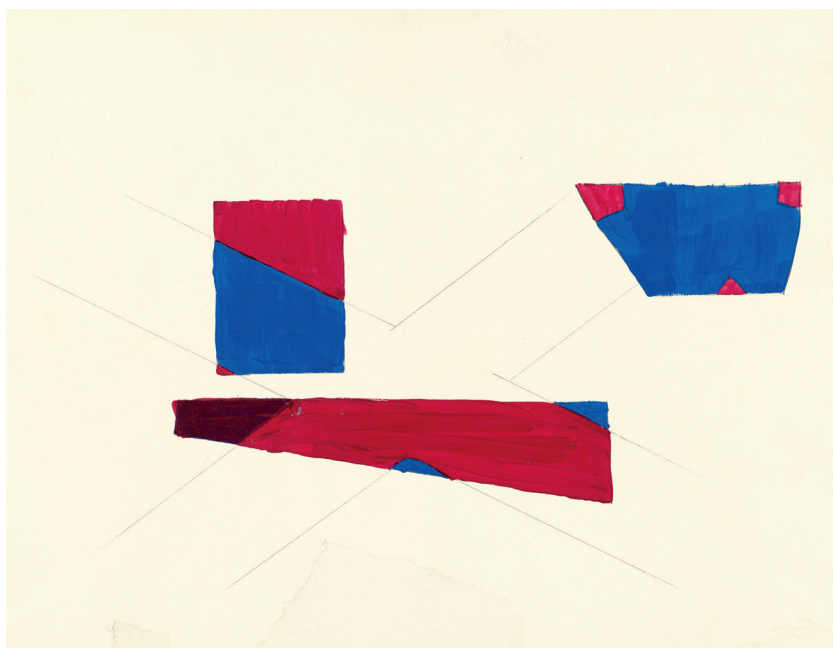


FIG. 29 *Working drawing*, 1964. Acrylic and graphite on paper. 14 × 17 inches; 36 × 43 cm

SEPTEMBER 14: Truitt meets with American art critic and psychiatrist Jules Langsner, who is credited with coining the term hard-edge abstraction.

OCTOBER 12: Truitt's friend Mary Meyer is murdered while walking along the C & O Canal Towpath in Washington, DC. Truitt plans to fly back to the states, but James persuades her to stay, as her first Tokyo exhibition will open the following week. The shocking news is compounded by a conversation Truitt had with Meyer before leaving for Japan, in which Meyer told Truitt that she was keeping a diary of her affair with Kennedy, and that Truitt should safeguard it "if anything ever happened to her." Truitt makes a person-to-person call to CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton, whom the Truitts know socially. She reaches Angleton at Ben Bradlee's house and tells him of the existence of the diary and Meyer's wish that it be recovered. Years later, intending to counter Bradlee's version of the episode as described in his 1995 autobiography *A Good Life*, Truitt and Cicely Angleton will clarify the events surrounding the diary in a letter to *The New York Times* dated November 5, 1995:

In accordance with Mary Meyer's explicit request, Anne Truitt asked Angleton to search for and to take charge of this diary. [...] This search was carried out, Mrs. Angleton affirms, in Mary



Meyer's house in the presence of her sister, Tony Bradlee; the Angletons, and one other friend of Mary Meyer's.

When Tony Bradlee found the diary and several papers bundled together in Mary Meyer's studio, she gave the entire package to Angleton and asked him to burn it. Angleton followed this instruction in part by burning the loose papers. He also followed Mary Meyer's instruction and safeguarded the diary. Some years later, he honored a request from Tony Bradlee that he deliver it to her. Subsequently, Tony Bradlee burned the diary in the presence of Anne Truitt.¹⁵

Reflecting on the loss of her close friend and her increasing sense of alienation in Japan, Truitt will later state, "I sort of just treaded water until I came to America in February of 1965."

OCTOBER 19 TO 31: The one-person exhibition "Truitt" opens at Minami Gallery, Tokyo (FIGS. 9 & 10). It includes four polyhedral aluminum sculptures, all from 1964 — *Down*, *Here*, *Back*, and *Out* — and five acrylic-on-paper works, including *Truitt '64 [3]* (1964) (FIG. 11).

OCTOBER 29: Truitt's Minami exhibition and Paul Jenkins's Tokyo Gallery exhibition are reviewed together in the Tokyo daily newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun*. The reviewer is effusive, calling them "first rate painters, two of the best artists of today," and describes Truitt's sculpture as "a new concept [...] using aluminum to create colors and forms which bring about startling optical illusions when viewed from all angles against different backgrounds." The reviewer also notes that Truitt "clears away everything, but only to reveal the fullness and mysterious plenitude of clarified space."¹⁶ A brief review also appears in the Tokyo daily *Asahi Shimbun*.¹⁷

NOVEMBER 10: Truitt attends one of four performances given by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Sogetsu Art Center. It is the last stop on the company's legendary six-month world tour through Europe and Asia with John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg. Truitt's datebook suggests that she attended the performance with Paul Jenkins, and it's likely that Jenkins would have been in contact with Cage, Rauschenberg, and Cunningham because of their mutual involvement with Jirō Yoshihara and the Gutai group in Osaka.

FIG. 30 *Out*, 1964. Acrylic on aluminum. 78 × 14 × 19 ¾ inches; 198 × 36 × 50 cm. Photographed in Tokyo, 1964

1965

JANUARY: The essay “Specific Objects” by Donald Judd is published in *Arts Yearbook*. In it, Judd mentions Truitt as one of several artists working in a new hybrid mode between painting and sculpture.¹⁸

JANUARY 13: Truitt sees MoMA curator William Lieberman, then curator of MoMA’s Department of Drawings and Prints. Lieberman is visiting Japan for the purpose of organizing his major traveling exhibition “The New Japanese Painting and Sculpture.”

FEBRUARY 1: *Martin Luther King, Jr., and more than 2,600 others are arrested in Selma, Alabama, during demonstrations against voter-registration rules.*

FEBRUARY 3 TO 23: Truitt flies to New York to prepare for her second one-person exhibition at André Emmerich. After a fourteen-hour flight, she goes directly to the opening of Kenneth Noland’s retrospective at the Jewish Museum, where she sees David Smith for what will be the last time. Staying with Ruth Pinchot (Mary Meyer’s mother), she has social engagements with Clement Greenberg, Kenneth Noland, Robert Motherwell, and Helen Frankenthaler, and sees the newly opened MoMA exhibition “The Responsive Eye.”

FEBRUARY 24 TO MARCH 13: Truitt’s exhibition opens at André Emmerich Gallery. Because of a dockworkers’ union strike, the main shipment of aluminum works from Japan are delayed in transit. As a stopgap measure, the gallery installs four works from her earlier Emmerich exhibition: *Thirtieth*, *Ship-Lap*, *Tribute*, and *Bloomsday*. It is possible that one or more aluminum works from an earlier shipment are included in this initial installation, though the precise checklist is uncertain. Once the main shipment of aluminum works is delivered, the earlier works, all made of poplar, are replaced by aluminum sculptures (FIG. 31-33). The final checklist is comprised of eight works, all from 1964: *Back*, *Out*, *Winter Solstice*, *Sea Garden*, *Late Snow*, *Morning Walk*, *Summer Run*, and *Wait*. Although the work *Here* is featured on the announcement, it is not included in the final installation.

The unintended juxtaposition of works in wood and aluminum leads to an unavoidable comparison between the two bodies of work — a comparison that is largely unfavorable to the latter. In his 1968 *Vogue* magazine profile of Truitt, Clement Greenberg will write about the exhibition, saying that Truitt “made the mistake of replacing [the earlier



FIGS. 31–33 Anne Truitt's second one-person exhibition at André Emmerich Gallery, New York, February–March 1965. Top image, from left: *Summer Run*, *Winter Solstice*, *Morning Walk*, *Late Snow*, *Out* (all 1964). Bottom images, from left: *Back*, *Winter Solstice*, *Morning Walk*, *Late Snow* (all 1964)



HOTEL VICTORIA PLAZA

MONTEVIDEO - URUGUAY

CABLE ADDRESS: INHOTELCOR

12 March 1965

Dear Anne,

I had an idea you might have gone back to Tokyo a little upset about your show, & I'm writing to tell you that you shouldn't be. It's seldom that a show jells anything for the artist himself, though it's more than human not to keep on hoping, with each new one, as every artist I've ever known does, that this one will do it. The issue, really, doesn't lie with a given show, but with the declaration of quality (as you know deep down) & after that the sustaining & developing of it. Whatever the actual seeming reception of your show right now, I know for myself that there's no doubt about its quality--rather the quality of your art as it manifests itself in less successful as well as fully successful pieces. That general quality is what counts in the long run, & the long run itself is all that counts. You've got what it takes, & you've already shown that to those who can see. From here on in it's a matter of keeping at it, show in & show out, or even no shows at all. And if you keep at it recognition will come, inevitably, only it will come without ever giving you full satisfaction & not in the way one dreams it will come. That's the way it was for Pollock & that's the way it's been for David & Ken--I mean recognition never came to them the way they'd hoped; it always remained a little ambiguous; & I honestly think that's the way it was for Matisse & is for Picasso. What's more important is that you have what it takes; I know that & you should.

So relax your will a little more, don't be so anxious; you don't need to be. I feel pretty sure your second "Japanese" phase is going to be one of--to sound like a French art critic--what I'd call generous realization. That seems to me to be implicit in the aluminum pieces I didn't like just as much as in the ones I did. It's quite possible that in the matter of your exile in Japan providence is conspiring with your gift & inspiration: by making things tougher it's also making the art itself better. One never knows here; the chances are that the worse it feels or seems the better it will turn out for the purposes of art. That's so often been the case with me & my writing.

Give my love to Jim & the children & take a lot for yourself.



Clem

FIG. 34 Letter from Clement Greenberg to Anne Truitt, March 12, 1965

wood sculptures], when the show was only a few days old, with newer but weaker pieces done in aluminum in Japan.”¹⁹

Of the eight aluminum works in the exhibition, two are sold to collectors — *Summer Run* and *Back*. Truitt will trade another work, *Winter Solstice*, to Helen Frankenthaler.

FEBRUARY 25: Artist V. V. Rankine and her husband Paul, a British intelligence officer, host a dinner party in Truitt’s honor. Included on the guest list are Betty Parsons, Frank Stella, Clement Greenberg, Kenneth Noland, Robert and Helen Motherwell, MoMA curator William Rubin, Anthony Caro, abstract painter Ray Parker, Whitney curator Edward Bryant, and Harold Rosenberg.

MARCH 7: Truitt flies back to Tokyo.

MARCH 8: *The first US combat troops arrive in South Vietnam. By the end of the year, 190,000 American soldiers will be deployed.*

MARCH 12: In a letter to Truitt (FIG. 34), Clement Greenberg writes, “I had an idea you might have gone back to Tokyo a little upset about your show, & I’m writing to tell you that you shouldn’t be. [...] Whatever the actual seeming reception of your show right now, I know for myself that there’s no doubt about its quality — rather the quality as it manifests itself in less successful as well as fully successful pieces. That general quality is what counts in the long run, & the long run itself is all that counts.”

He also advises, “I feel pretty sure your second ‘Japanese’ phase is going to be one of — to sound like a French art critic — what I’d call generous realization.”²⁰

MARCH 18: Disappointed by the reception of her second Emmerich exhibition, Truitt begins to perceive a lack of integration between the color and form of the aluminum works. She calls them, pejoratively, “painted sculptures.” Next to a thumbnail sketch dated March 18, she notes, “This is a painted sculpture, what I do not want.” On the reverse of an airmail envelope sent care of André Emmerich, she posits an idea that will come to define much of her practice (FIG. 35): “Not painted sculpture, but sculpture which is color. Color doesn’t necessarily identify shape. Color is light.”

MARCH 23: On paper scraps surrounding a cut-out paper maquette, Truitt interrogates her process in a series of handwritten notes:

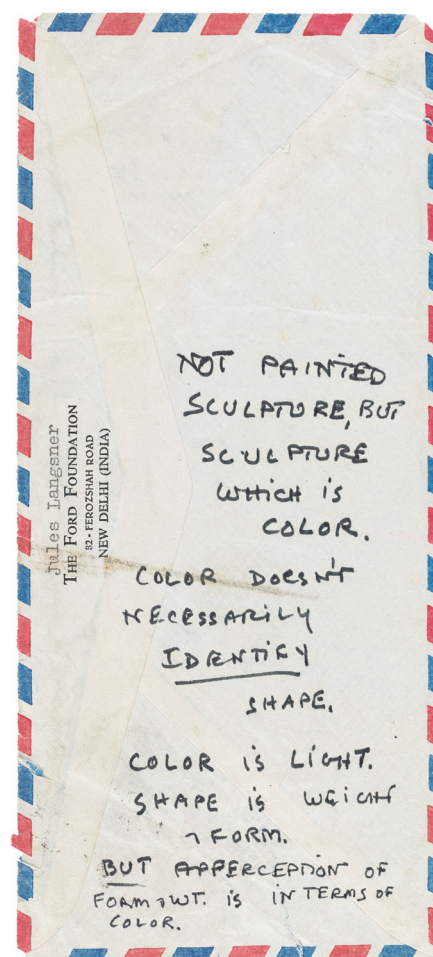


FIG. 35 Note by Anne Truitt, March 1965

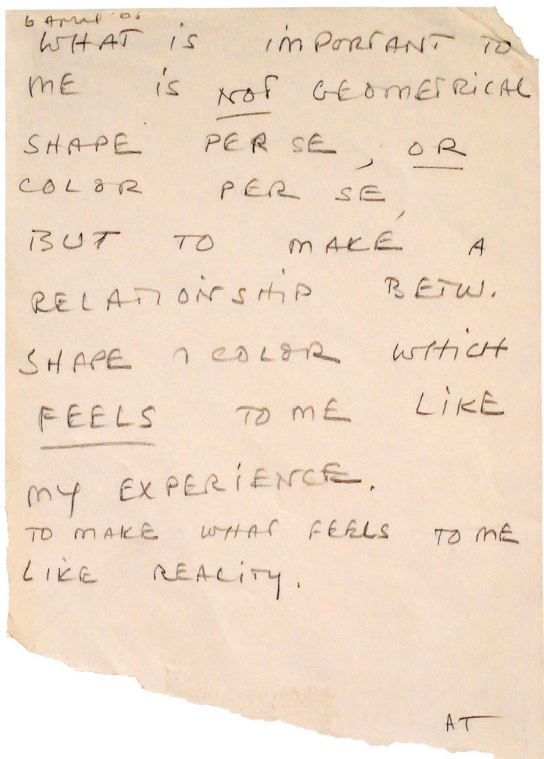
I reduce the object to its lines of force (no bulk)

I use color to give variations of light which in turn reinforce the reality of the object.

If the shape is diagonal, the color must be rectangular. If the shape is rectangular (regular — circular, etc.) the color must be diagonal.

Throughout the spring and summer she works on a series of acrylic works on paper. Though not studies in a directly proximate sense, the increasingly elongated horizontal forms have a clear relationship to the aluminum sculptures and are typically rendered in two and sometimes three colors (FIGS. 11 & 13). The color palette suggests the use of the same marine paint used on the sculptures.

APRIL: Vivien Raynor reviews the André Emmerich exhibition in *Arts Magazine*. She expresses indifference to the use of color (“The color is not in itself interesting; black and white would probably do as well”) but finds merit in the way the works effect an illusory flattening of perspective, ultimately praising the show as having “a good sculptural sensibility behind it.”²¹



WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO
ME IS NOT GEOMETRICAL
SHAPE PER SE, OR
COLOR PER SE,
BUT TO MAKE A
RELATIONSHIP BETW.
SHAPE & COLOR WHICH
FEELS TO ME LIKE
MY EXPERIENCE.
TO MAKE WHAT FEELS TO ME
LIKE REALITY.

AT

Lawrence Campbell, writing in *ARTnews*, argues that the works “exist on the outskirts of both Pop and Op: Pop because they suggest the things in the landscapes of the modern age, Op because her colors — contrasty or bright, subdued or palely opposing each other — slice and destroy the appearance of volume, flatten it to create, sometimes, the illusion of a portable landscape.”²²

APRIL 6: Truitt makes a handwritten note on a small scrap of paper (FIG. 36):

What is important to me is not geometrical shape per se, or color per se, but to make a relationship between shape and color which feels to me like my experience.

To make what feels to me like reality.

MAY 12: Truitt again visits the Almit aluminum factory. She has begun work on a new series of aluminum sculptures that formally diverge from her polyhedral forms in that each work has the appearance of being fabricated from a single sheet of aluminum folded one or more times (FIG. 38). (In the case of acute angles, it is necessary to weld together separate panels.) The folds lend the works a freestanding verticality, not unlike a folding screen.

FIG. 36 Note by Anne Truitt, April 1965

Many of these works are painted in two contrasting colors separated by a hard-edged diagonal, the intended effect being an illusionistic space when looked at from a distance. Truitt identifies a local garden in Shibuya, Tokyo, as an inspiration for this motif: “I was influenced — I hate the word influenced — by the Meiji Shrine where the iris garden is planted in such an artful way — a very small length in a very small field. One has the impression of a very great distance because they made it in kind of a mouse’s tail like *Alice in Wonderland*.²³ [...] It diminishes as it goes into the distance and the bridges across it cut it in such a way as to lend it distance.”

MAY 23: David Smith dies in a car accident in Bennington, Vermont. Truitt reads about it in the *Asahi Shimbun* morning newspaper; a cable from Kenneth Noland arrives an hour later. Years later Truitt will write, “Certain deaths stand as landmarks, and David’s was such a landmark for me. He unknotted me from the art world by dying, as I felt in some deep way closest to him. Not that I knew him really well, in the sense of intimacy other than compatibility of temperament — but that is intimacy in itself, deeper than other kinds. [...] His strength was a comfort to me.”²⁴

MAY 25: Almit delivers the first of the newly fabricated “folded” works to Truitt’s studio.

Although continuing to work in aluminum, Truitt is still dissatisfied with the way the sprayed-on color integrates with the form. Earlier in the spring, wondering if she should switch from Nippon marine paint to the Liquitex acrylic used on her earlier wood sculptures in the States, she wrote to Louisa Jenkins for advice. In a letter from May 5, Jenkins replied,

I talked to one of our best men on the new paints. He feels that for the aluminum, as long as you have treated it with your etching first, you will not have any trouble if you give it a couple of coats of your liquidex [*sic*] and then a varnish. The main thing is to make the bind between your paint and the aluminum, and if this is carefully done with your etching coat, he feels it will be permanent.

Truitt calls the vice president of Liquitex — also a longtime resource for technical advice — and orders a large assortment of acrylic paint. As with the Nippon marine paint, she applies the Liquitex with a spray gun. She will find the results disappointing, however, citing the aluminum-specific undercoating as problematic. “I still had to use yellow iron

oxide undercoating. That means, of course, no matter what I did after that I never could get the glow I got from ten coats of titanium white.”

Eventually she will identify the aluminum material itself as part of the problem:

The relationship between aluminum and my body is too disparate. I’m not comfortable with it. [...] One reason I like wood is that the paint works with it. The color has to marry the sculpture. The color has to melt into it, become intrinsic to it, and it doesn’t do that with aluminum. An aluminum sculpture is automatically a painted sculpture. The paint lies on the surface, and there’s no way to get beyond it.²⁵

JUNE 1 TO 25: *Jasper Johns exhibition opens at Minami Gallery, Tokyo. It is among the artist’s earliest international exhibitions.*

JUNE 9: Truitt meets celebrated Japanese author Yukio Mishima.

JULY: Truitt receives a telegram dated July 5th from André Emmerich:

RICHMAN WASHINGTON INSTITUTE CONTEMPORARY ART
WANTS SHOW DOZEN OLDER SCULPTURES NEXT WEEK
NOLAND, CLEM AND I RECOMMEND REFUSAL PLEASE
CABLE DECISION BEST ANDRE.

Truitt sends her agreement.

AUGUST 22 TO 24: James Lee Byars and his girlfriend Taki Sachiko visit Truitt in Tokyo. With an expired visa and no money, Byars’s situation has become dire. Truitt contacts Maurice Tuchman, a Guggenheim Museum curator who has recently moved to Los Angeles to become the first curator of twentieth-century art at LACMA. She puts Byars on a plane to Los Angeles, where Tuchman meets him at the airport. Tuchman will be instrumental in helping to establish Byars’s career in the US.

AUGUST 26: Truitt sends André Emmerich photographs of sculptures finished since her exhibition the previous February, including some of her newer folded aluminum works. She cautions that the works in the reproductions are

painted with my Japanese marine paint, but I am waiting for a shipment of Liquitex from America. This will mean considerably

more freedom with color and value, as you can imagine. School begins on September 14th, and I can then launch into the six new pieces which are now fabricated and undercoated in the studio. They are the same concept as the folded aluminum sheets illustrated here, with variations in angle, height, and length.

She also notes in her letter that she is “experimenting with Japanese paper, dipping and dyeing it with clear, simple demarcations like those of the sculpture.”²⁶ Earlier in the spring, after returning from the States, Truitt visited the Meiji-era specialty paper shop Haibara in Tokyo’s Ginza district. She would later recall,

I began to accept Japan. I began to dye the papers. I began to use Japanese materials. I gave in. My Japanese was really pretty good by that time, so I went to the best paper store in Tokyo, where men come out, kneel down, and present you with papers of various sorts. Hundreds, maybe even thousands of kinds of different paper in different sizes and shapes, and all hand made. I took to using Japanese paper of various sorts and experimenting to see what I could saturate, and I began to soak them in color.

In this way Truitt initiates a new body of work using highly diluted ink in a paper-saturating technique she calls glazing (FIG. 21):

I did successive, very fine, thin, watery layers. Nothing but water soaked into very fine Japanese paper. I put the ink on the bottom of the cookie sheets, mixing it with my hands until it was watery, and then I would dip this very fine Japanese paper in it. Then I would hang it on a line in my studio with clothespins. I would dip each one about fifteen times.

Later Truitt will comment that this process caused her to “think differently about layering” in a way that will have applications in her sculptures when she returns to the States.

SEPTEMBER: Truitt revisits fence-like forms in a series of drawings suggestive of her formative 1961 work *First* (PAGES 65–69).

OCTOBER: *Art in America* publishes Barbara Rose’s “ABC Art,” one of the first major essays to attempt a comprehensive analysis of Minimal art. In it Rose proposes a polarity emblemized by Duchamp and Malevich, placing Truitt squarely within the camp of Malevich’s “search for the transcendent, universal, [and] absolute.”²⁷ The Truitt sculpture *Late Snow* (1964) accompanies the essay as an illustration.



FIG. 37 Anne Truitt with *Spring Wind* at her Tokyo studio, 1965

In mid-October Truitt receives a letter from André Emmerich, dated October 6, in which he recounts a lunch with Kenneth Noland and Clement Greenberg. “We started off by looking at your new color transparencies. [...] And I am writing you tonight to tell you of their complete, full and unfeigned enthusiasm! [...] Theirs was an absolutely enthusiastic, heartwarming response to your work, its importance and beauty.” He also responds to Truitt’s recent concerns about the need to exhibit in Europe. He advises that Greenberg’s “reaction was pretty much mine, i.e. he felt that you ought not worry about it now, that it will take care of itself in due course: that it will all follow of its own accord.”²⁸

OCTOBER 15 TO 16: *Vietnam War protests occur in eighty cities worldwide, including Tokyo.*

NOVEMBER 8: Over the next days and weeks Truitt dedicates time to writing about her formative friendships with artists David Smith, Kenneth Noland, and Morris Louis. Most of these texts take the form of letters to Clement Greenberg. In a letter dated November 8 she recounts her history with Noland, from their initial encounters in 1948 at the Institute of Contemporary Art to their ongoing friendship.

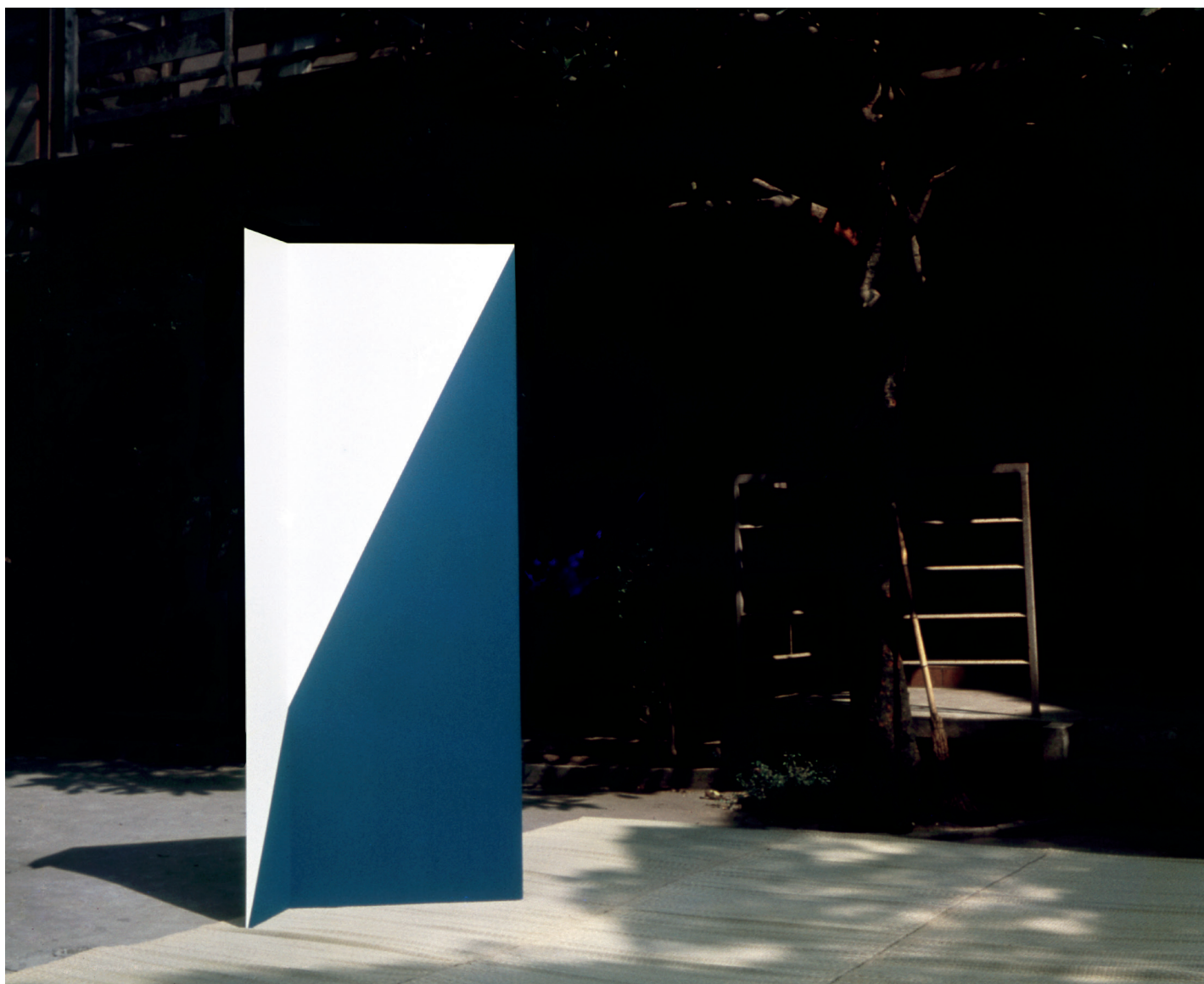
NOVEMBER 23: In a handwritten document marked “6:30 AM” Truitt writes about Morris Louis, who she became friends with toward the end of his life. She also writes about the “galvanizing” effect that Noland had on Louis and other Washington painters, describing the way he “creates a sort of powerful force magnetizing the free-floating talent towards New York.”²⁹

NOVEMBER 25: Thanksgiving dinner with MoMA curator William Lieberman.

DECEMBER 2 TO 3: At 5:00 AM Truitt begins writing a twelve-page remembrance of David Smith that she will continue early the following morning. It begins, “I miss David terribly. Very much more than is logical.” She goes on to describe what she perceived as his constant anxiety about mortality (“That David was pushed and harried and maddened by it made a bond between him and me”), his mastery over materials (“He was very generous with technical advice. His professional competence was absolute”), and his exceptional eye (“To have David in your studio changes the context of your work; he focuses on the history of art. It was inexpressibly glorious, a great feeling of possibility”).³⁰

DECEMBER 1 TO JANUARY 17: The group exhibition “Seven Sculptors” opens at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Truitt’s sculptures *Out* and *Sea Garden* (both

FIG. 38 *Signal*, 1965. Acrylic on aluminum. 79 × 33 ½ × 12 inches; 201 × 85 × 30 cm. Photographed outside Truitt’s home in Tokyo, February 1966



1964) are included among works by Anthony Caro, John Chamberlain, Donald Judd, Alexander Liberman, Tina Matkovic, and David Smith. Catalogue essays, one on each artist, are contributed by seven writers, including Judd on Chamberlain, Robert Smithson on Judd, and Bill Berkson on David Smith. In Gerald Nordland's essay on Truitt, he describes her work as belonging to an emerging sensibility that rejects "romantic individualism" and "the picturesque" for "understatement, literalness, and control."³¹ The exhibition is an important precursor to the Jewish Museum's "Primary Structures" the following year.

DECEMBER 20: In a follow-up letter to Greenberg, Truitt describes her last show in New York as "catastrophic, for all sorts of reasons, some professional, some personal," and notes André Emmerich's "unfailing support." She also makes reference to the letter Greenberg wrote to her following that exhibition:

It came at a time when my struggle was with the bare bones of despair. The knowledge of being totally alone was, for the first time, bitter to me. Your affirmation withdrew that bitter thorn. All that I have done since, or will ever do, springs more freely and more joyously because you cared enough to write me.³²

1966

JANUARY: During this period Truitt begins reading the works of Teilhard de Chardin, beginning with *The Future of Man*, his classic work on theology and science. In a letter to Louisa Jenkins, who recommended the author, Truitt writes,

The lucidity and purity of his mind and the elasticity of his prose is a delight. I find that his world sets a grid of meaning over mine, and bestows upon it a kind of reality which reinforces my experience. [...] I really need [Chardin] here, where I continue to struggle with my own failures and diminishments, sometimes with a very faint heart. Perhaps what I came to Japan to learn was a total defeat. And what lies beyond defeat, a framework only dimly perceived but infinitely beguiling in its allure.³³

JANUARY 8: At 5:00 AM Truitt writes,

Tony Caro showed me pictures of his new work, which I saw then for the first time, at Thanksgiving in 1963. This work focused my attention on the fact that a sculpture could go in any direction — literally — up and down, left and right in degrees. Up until that

In the exhibition catalogue McShine will write of her work: “The archi-tectonic constructions [...] are inert, grounded volumes with applied color affirming their mass and gravitational pull, qualities sometimes tempered by deliberate ironies.”³⁷

Truitt herself has written a poem about the sculpture *Sea Garden*, which she submits as a kind of artist’s statement to accompany the work:

There was a blue sea, and above it
was a yellow hill and beside the hill was
a green field. On the other side of the blue sea
was a blue sea, and on the other side of the
yellow hill was a yellow hill, and on the other
side of the green field was a green field.
And that was a sea garden³⁸

MAY 23: Truitt continues her written remembrance of Kenneth Noland that she began the previous November, again writing it in the form of a letter to Greenberg. Over the course of the ten-page typewritten text she recounts an episode from 1964, shortly before moving to Japan, when she vacated Noland’s former studio:

We went through all his old paintings which I had stacked up around the place, and decided (Ken decided, I advised and dissuaded in certain cases, saying I thought you [Greenberg] should see them first) which should be destroyed. He slashed them with a knife, and then had to go back to Vermont. I finished destroying them (some I had seen painted years ago), slashing them further and smashing the frames, and then had them taken to the Washington dump. All very carefully done, remembering Morris’s experience.

As a clarification of this last sentence, she writes in the margin, “Morris Louis put discarded paintings in the trash, and they were stolen — sold too, I think.”³⁹

JUNE 20: Truitt writes a letter to André Emmerich in which she explains some of the ideas she is working through in the aluminum sculptures:

When I returned from NY last year I found myself in a bind and the bind seemed to me to be space. If I proceeded in the direction I had been working, I had to turn toward larger and larger objects. What I conceived, plastically, in terms of directly apperceived volume, loomed outside reasonable dimensions — 20 feet high, 30



FIG. 41 *Truitt '66 [8]*, 1966. Acrylic and graphite on paper. 5 × 27 ½ inches; 13 × 70 cm

feet long, 80 feet deep; 100 feet high, 80 feet long, 300 feet deep. I was really hung up. If I had been smarter, I thought to myself, I would have been an architect. For a while it seemed impossible, total stoppage. I could just feel those pieces, exactly what they should be and clamored to be. Until they pushed at me so that I turned, shifted, to another dimension of perception: could it be, I thought, that if I used only what my eyes saw, actually saw, combined with the lines of force of what I felt plastically, that I could make objects of viable size experienced as objects as forceful as the ones which compelled me?

So I turned to sheets of aluminum which would define a space for me in terms of force, actual perceptible plastic force. These fields of force I could then reorganize in terms of visual force, i.e., in terms of visual cues, in terms of color and line and value. In terms of the visual cues I was unlimited.

So far, in the work that I have done for the past year, I see what I feel struggling into being. It moves slowly, and I move along with it hopefully, uncertainly in one sense, certainly in that it moves.⁴⁰

JUNE 22: Truitt receives a letter from Clement Greenberg dated June 18. In it he advises that he was “disappointed” by the new works of hers that arrived in New York:

I was surprised to discover they were made of aluminum instead of heavy cardboard — which was what their color made them look like. Mike Fried expressed no opinion at all. I'm being frank. And I don't think you should show these pieces — maybe one or two in a group show, but not five or six in a one-man show [...] Even if I hadn't known you were in Japan, I'd have said you were Orientalizing: arting things up with distilled good taste.



All the same, it's no disaster. You've got a long life ahead of you. You talk about being "pushed out" if you don't have a show this year. "Out" doesn't exist for serious art or serious artists. There's a wave of new constructor-sculptors in NY this year: Judd, Morris, Bladen, et al. They're in, Pop & Op are going out; but they're going to be out sooner or later too. All you can do is wait things out. [...]

If you really have the stuff — & I think you do — what your art has suffered in Japan in terms of time lost & blind alleys wandered into will only add to it in the long run; it'll be so much more put into it in the way of "content," which is what the NY hot-shots lack most & will do them in in the end.

Greenberg also makes an oddly prescriptive suggestion, which possibly betrays his increasingly entrenched position relative to the more highly reductive "anti-art" that he will denounce in his essay "Recentness of Sculpture":

My only advice to you, in the way of art, is that you try, just for fun, to make your pieces for a while as physically complicated & intricate as you can. One of the major weaknesses of the present NY hot-shots is that they simplify by rote.⁴¹

In response, Truitt drafts a reply that begins, "Even though your opinion of my work is so bad, I am glad to hear from you." She goes on to say that she is "not startled" by his reaction to the new sculptural work in aluminum:

For one thing, and this is obviously very personal, I have been very, very ill all winter, and indeed for longer than that. But last December I went into a deep depression and began to have all sorts of physical and mental symptoms which absolutely flattened me.

Noting that she is now doing better with the help of an "excellent German analyst," she continues,

I never stopped working, but it was terribly difficult, and I struggled from day to day, just not giving up. In some way it was as if I were in a tunnel and had just put one foot in front of another for all that time, and during the last few weeks, when I have been feeling better, it has occurred to me — looking at my work and remembering it — that I got hold of a part of what I want in my work and simply ran it into the ground.

FIG. 42 *Western Line*, 1966. Acrylic on aluminum.
39 ½ × 65 × 18 inches; 100 × 165 × 46 cm. Photographed
outside Truitt's home in Tokyo, February 1966

She then goes on to reiterate her objectives regarding space in the aluminum works, in much the same terms as her letter to Emmerich from two days earlier. “Could it be, I now ask myself in view of my own questionings and your reaction (which I gather André must share) that I have been down a long blind alley? I just can’t tell, and may not be able to for some time.” She mentions that she hopes to get out of Tokyo and stay at a house in the country for a couple of months, then concludes,

If you get a chance to look again at the pieces, and feel inclined to do so, I would be glad to hear if your feelings change at all. If they don’t — and I imagine that they won’t since I have infinite faith in your take — and if André is reluctant to show these also except, as you suggest, in possible group shows, it seems to me that I would be wise to forego a show this year. It seems plain to me that if my work is not worth showing then it should not be shown.

She then concludes by sending her love and thanking Greenberg for his “promptness and kindness” and “straight talk.” The letter will remain unsent.⁴²

JUNE 22: Studio visit with Kusuo Shimizu and Yoshiaki Tōno, most likely to discuss Truitt’s inclusion in a group exhibition that Tōno is curating for Minami Gallery. Tōno, already an influential figure in Japanese contemporary art, coined the term “anti-art” (*Han-geijutsu*), which has become attached to much of the Japanese experimental art of the period. Because he often travels to the United States, he is an important bridge between Japan and American artists such as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.

AUGUST 8: In a letter to Louisa Jenkins, Truitt writes,

“Confidence forces the limits of determinism and disciplines chance.” As always, de Chardin expressed what is most helpful and hopeful in the clearest way imaginable. For me at this particular time, it is totally apt. Medically speaking, my doctor says I am out of the woods. But my confidence is feeble, and totters weakly. I have no idea whether I shall ever be able to make art again.⁴³

SEPTEMBER 26 TO OCTOBER 13: The group exhibition “Color + Space” (*Shikisai to Kūkan*) opens at Minami Gallery, Tokyo (FIG. 43). Curated by Yoshiaki Tōno, the thematic exhibition includes work by six Japanese artists — Arata Isozaki, Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, Shintarō Tanaka, Tomio Miki, Kazuo Yuhara, and Mamoru Goto — and two American artists — Anne Truitt and Sam Francis. Truitt exhibits a newly finished folded

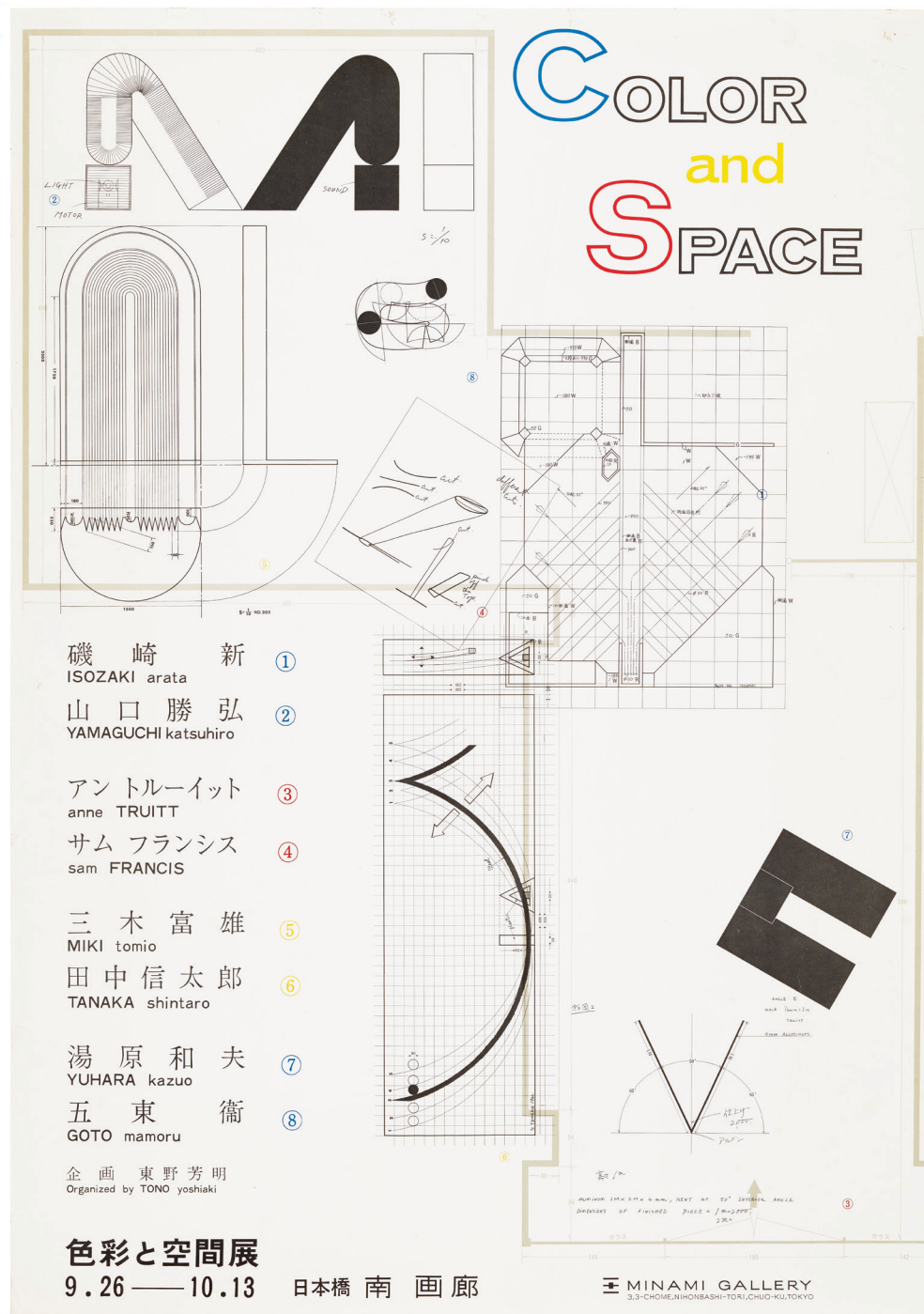


FIG. 43 Poster for the exhibition "Color + Space" at Minami Gallery, Tokyo, 1966

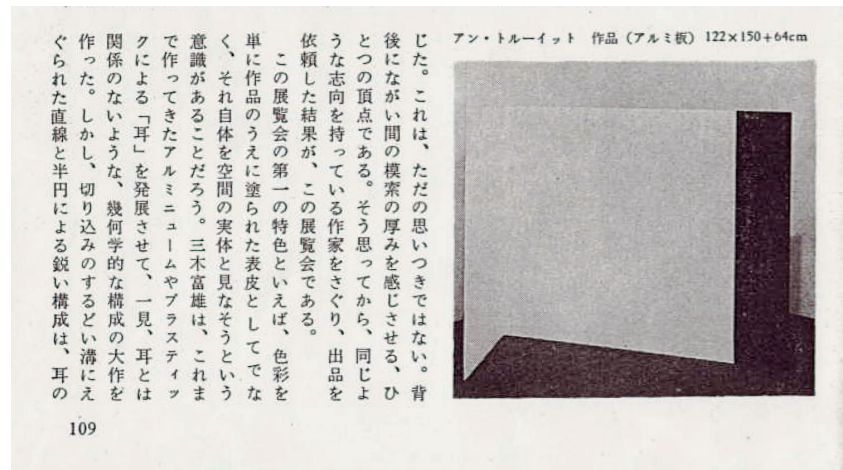


FIG. 44 Review of "Color + Space," featuring an illustration of Truitt's unidentified sculpture from 1966, in *Bijutsu Techo*, December 1966

aluminum work (FIG. 44) — the only occasion one of the folded sculptures is ever exhibited. The title of this work is not known, nor is its present whereabouts. The show will receive significant coverage in the Japanese press, and will help introduce Japanese audiences to the previously unfamiliar concept of industrially fabricated artwork.

FALL: Truitt begins a series of sumi ink drawings on Fabriano watercolor paper (PAGES 71-75). (She notes later that she could not find her preferred Arches paper in Japan.)⁴⁴ Each composition is in a columnar format, with straight-edged stripes painted top to bottom in varying registers of gray. To achieve these different values, she mixes brown Carter's ink with sumi ink. She recalls,

My sensibility is perfectly tuned to sumi because I really care desperately about those faint differences. The one thing that happened with my eyes in Tokyo was that, because of living all of the time with what was for me a colorless land, my eyes changed so that I was able to discern very slight differences in hue and value to a much greater degree than I could remember. My whole feeling for color and hue changed, but particularly for value.

Erasure markings on some of the sumi ink drawings suggest that Truitt may have originally conceived of them as horizontal works. It appears that the artist subsequently moved and rotated her signature ninety degrees, so that the central stripes would be viewed in a vertical orientation.

Also during this period Truitt will again return to imagery suggestive of siding or picket fencing in several drawings rendered in titanium white and graphite (PAGES 65–69).

OCTOBER 12: Clement Greenberg arrives in Tokyo with the exhibition “Two Decades of American Painting” (October 15 to November 27), hosted by the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and organized by the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (a program that some have suggested was a CIA-funded Cold War initiative).⁴⁵ The exhibition will travel from Tokyo to Kyoto, New Delhi, Melbourne, and Sydney.

OCTOBER 14: The Tokyo leg of the MoMA exhibition opens, followed by a reception at the US Embassy on October 17. Traveling with the exhibition are James Rosenquist, Jasper Johns, and Ad Reinhardt.⁴⁶ In a later interview, Truitt will recall that this was her only personal encounter with Reinhardt.⁴⁷ Truitt had also greatly anticipated the arrival of Helen Frankenthaler and Robert Motherwell, but the couple canceled the trip when Motherwell sustained a back injury.

OCTOBER 22: Truitt hosts one of several meals with Clement Greenberg, who will be in Japan through November 14. During his stay Truitt describes him as “an adopted member” of the family: “He enhanced all our lives, especially those of my children, for it was one of Clem’s courtesies to treat children attentively. He bought them Beatles records and danced them around the living room!”⁴⁸ She describes his visit as “like being placed in a field where the needle pointed true north; the range of his knowledge is so informed by his sensitivity that his line of judgment is very pure and sure. And not only in art.”⁴⁹

1967

JANUARY 10 TO FEBRUARY 1: Traveling alone, Truitt takes a three-week trip to the United States, during which she will visit friends and relatives in Washington, DC, New York, and California. While in New York she meets celebrated curator Walter Hopps at a cocktail party:

I turned my head, and there was Walter Hopps looming down over me. We just looked at each other and recognized that we were going to be friends.

The trip will have an unquestionably positive affect on her outlook back in Japan. She later recalls the flight home:

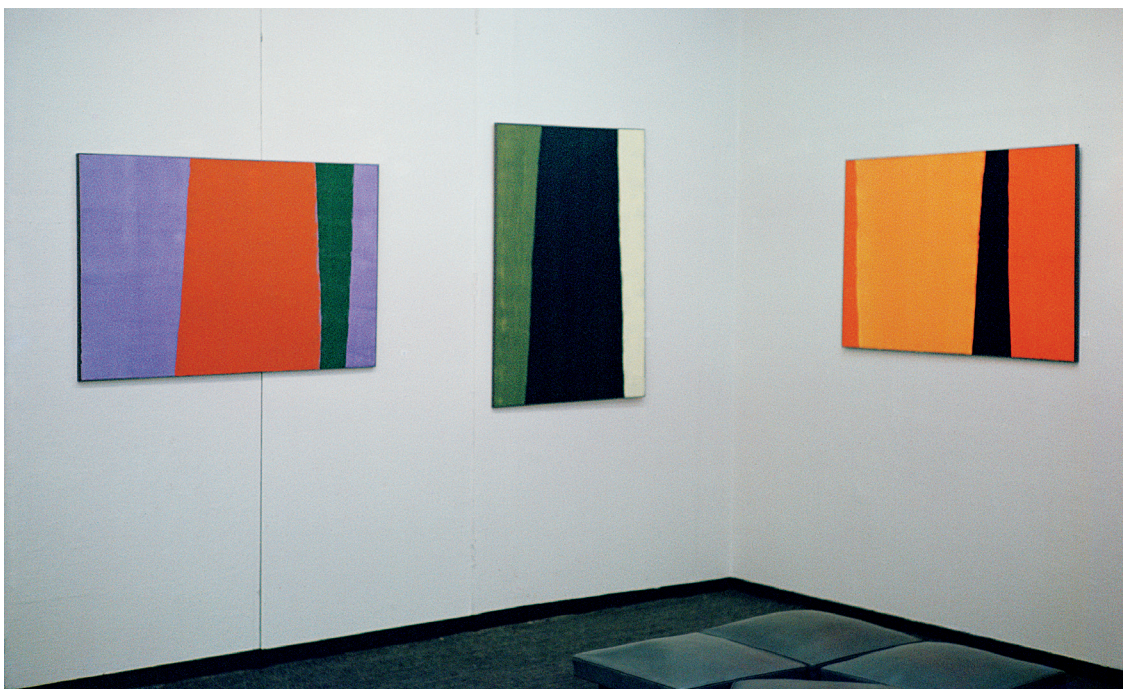


FIG. 45 & 46 Exterior and installation view of "Anne Truitt 1967" at Minami Gallery, Tokyo, 1967

Slowly I saw Japan loom into sight. And when it did, I thought to myself, I won't do that again — I won't go home now until we move home. And I realized that I could then settle in Japan if I had to.

FEBRUARY 16: In a letter to Louisa Jenkins, Truitt writes,

I just got a cable saying "Coming up Sunday," and since it's unsigned I suspect it's from Jim Byars. As it happens, I am working hard on drawings for my show which comes up on the 27th and would prefer not to have guests. Oh dear. I'm really struggling with these drawings, and feel upset about how my insides were changed by my trip; the work looks different to me now and that throws me off. [...] The things I am doing now are just color and space on big sheets of white paper, mostly more space than color, so if the color isn't right the space becomes inert. So there I am with cold hands and feet and your old blue cap on my head mixing little pots of color for all the world like some medieval alchemist! It really has its amusing aspect. To care so much for art when the world lies around us so splendidly is surely some kind of strange obsession.⁵⁰

In this same letter, Truitt reveals a significant development: "James says he wants to move back to the United States some time soon, early in the summer."⁵¹ Apropos of this news, she will later comment,

As soon as I knew I was going home, my color began to get better. I do not know why exactly, since the light was still wrong. I think my heart began to lift, and I thought, thank God I am going to Washington, on my own latitude and longitude, where I will not be so isolated. At least the light will be right.

FEBRUARY 19: James Lee Byars arrives. His financial and legal status in the country has again become precarious, hinging upon whether his college teaching position will be extended for another year. Pending his ability to stay, he reveals his plan to marry his longtime partner, Taki Sachiko. Truitt gives Byars a white tulle wedding veil and a bottle of vermouth to take back to Taki. She will later write to Louisa Jenkins, "I do love to think of Taki having pleasure; she needs it, and is shy about it. Apparently she adores vermouth."⁵²

FEBRUARY 27 TO MARCH 11: "Anne Truitt 1967" opens (FIGS. 45 & 46). It is Truitt's second one-person exhibition at Minami Gallery in Tokyo. The show is comprised of more than twenty works, including three sumi ink drawings, six all-over abstractions with vertical bands of contrasting

acrylic applied via roller (FIG. 24), and twelve works depicting stacked or adjacent rectilinear forms that abut the edge of the paper's white ground on at least one side (FIG. 25). For these latter works, the Liquitex acrylic has been applied to masked areas for a hard-edged effect. All are mounted on thin wood supports in the Japanese style, which lend the drawings a physicality echoing that of a stretched canvas. Indeed, the gallery press release refers to them as a "collection of paintings which the artist calls drawings."⁵³

The show will receive extensive coverage in the local press, including positive reviews in *The Japan Times* (March 1), the *Asahi Evening News* (March 3), and the Tokyo daily newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun* (March 6).

MARCH: Truitt embarks on a new series of monochromatic works in acrylic on paper. Working with a roller, she applies thin washes of color to achieve subtle chromatic gradations, with more pronounced color shifts visible in the form of typically vertical, columnar forms (PAGES 81-87). Unlike her previous geometric drawings, there are no hard edges in these new works. In a March 13 letter to Louisa Jenkins, Truitt connects this development to her January visit to the States:

Something happened to me on that trip, and when I got back I found myself unable to tape a line, unable to make anything that wasn't free-hand — a very surprising change it was to me, thoroughly startling, as I have been working strictly within the lines of geometric color and shape since 1961.⁵⁴

Truitt's confidence in this new manner of working is evident. In the same letter, she describes it as a "boom in the studio." She continues,

They are turning more toward strict exploration of hue; one color with very, very slight gradations of hue. They interest me a lot, and they have that autonomy of their own which guarantees their own organic progression. You can imagine my joy to have this going on once again inside me after those months and months of sterility.

She also contemplates the significance of the color now extending to — or beyond — the edge of the paper:

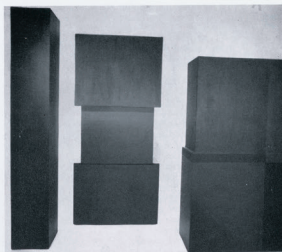
As I feel it, this lets the colors relate not only to the space within the picture frame, but to the space outside it, i.e. to the same space that I and other objects occupy. [...] It means to me that the colors and space can then breathe, or operate, in a context larger, and to me more exciting, more provocative, than that of a made picture.⁵⁵

distinct from the program, turns out to be in good safe taste. I find myself back in the realm of Good Design, where Pop, Op, Assemblage, and the rest of Novelty Art live. By being employed as tokens, the "primary structures" are converted into mannerisms. The third dimension itself is converted into a mannerism. Nor have most of the Minimalists escaped the familiar, reassuring context of the pictorial: wraiths of the picture rectangle and the Cubist grid haunt their works, asking to be filled out—and filled out they are, with light-and-dark drawing.

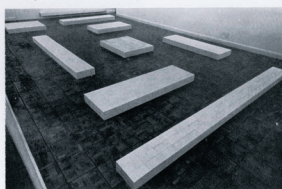
All of which might have puzzled me more had I not already had the experience of Rauschenberg's blank canvases, and of Yves Klein's all-blue ones. And had I not seen another notable token of far-outness, Reinhardt's shadowy monochrome, part like a veil to reveal a delicate and very timid sensibility. (Reinhardt has a genuine if small gift for color, but none at all for design or placing. I can see why he let Newman, Rothko, and Still influence him towards close and dark values, but he lost more than he gained by the desperate extreme to which he went, changing from a nice into a true artist.) I had also learned that works whose ingredients were notionally "rough" could be very soft as wholes; and vice versa. I remember hearing Abstract Expressionist painters ten years ago talking about how you had to make it ugly, and deliberately driving their color, only to render what they did still more stereotyped. The best of Monet's lily-pad paintings—or the best of Louis's and Orlan's paintings—are not made any the less challenging and arduous, on the other hand, by their nominally sweet color. Equations like these cannot be thought out in advance, they can only be felt and discovered.

In any case, the far-out as end in itself was already caught sight of, in the area of sculpture, by Anthony Caro in England back in 1960. But it came to him as a matter of experience and inspiration, not of ratiocination, and he converted it immediately from an end into a means—a means of pursuing a vision that required sculpture to be more integrally abstract than it had ever been before. The far-out as end in itself was already used up and compromised by the time the notion of it reached the Minimalists; used up by Caro and the other English sculptors for whom he was an example; compromised by Novelty Art.

Still another artist who anticipated the Minimalists is Anne Truitt. And she anticipated them more literally and therefore, as it seems to me, more embarrassingly than Caro did. The

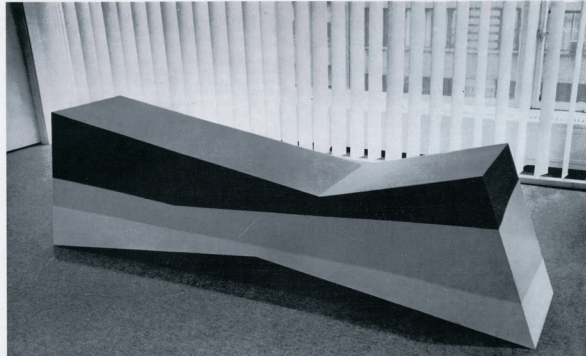
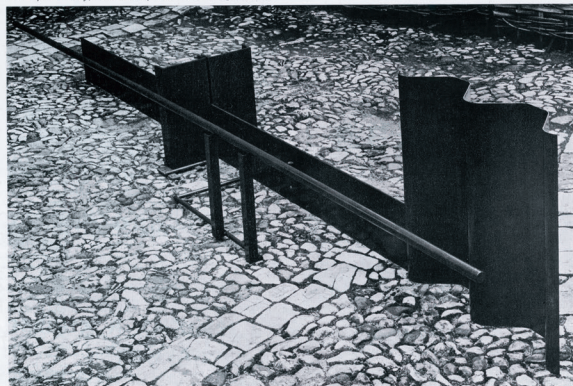


Anne Truitt. Three untitled sculptures in painted wood, shown in 1962 at the Wadsworth Atheneum in the exhibition, "Black, White and Grey". Courtesy André Emmerich Gallery.

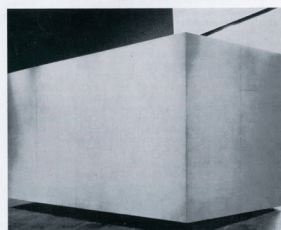


View of the Carl Andre exhibition, Tibor de Nagy Gallery, April 1966.

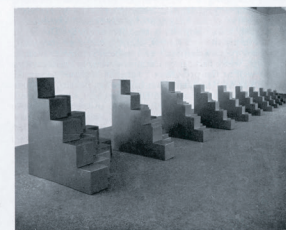
Anthony Caro. *Angs*, 1966. Courtesy Galerie Bischofberger, Zurich.



Anne Truitt. *Summer Run*, 1964. Painted aluminum; length 92", height 27". Courtesy André Emmerich Gallery.



Ronald Bladen. Untitled model in wood, to be made in metal. 1966. 8' x 8' x 16". Fischbach Gallery.



Robert Smithson. *Alga 2*, 1966. Painted steel. Dwan Gallery.

surprise of the box-like pieces in her first show in New York, early in 1963 (at Emmerich's), was much like that which Minimal Art aims at. Despite their being covered with rectangular zones of color, I was stopped by their deadpan "primariness", and I had to look again and again, and I had to return again, to discover the power of these "boxes" to move and affect. Far-outness here was stated rather than merely announced and signalled. It was hard to tell whether the success of Truitt's best works was primarily sculptural or pictorial, but part of their success consisted precisely in making that question irrelevant.

Truitt's art did flirt with the look of non-art, and her 1963 show was the first occasion on which I noticed how this look could confer an effect of *presence*. That presence as achieved through size was esthetically extraneous, I already knew. That presence as achieved through the look of non-art was likewise esthetically extraneous, I did not yet know. Truitt's sculpture had this kind of presence but did not *hide* behind it. That sculpture could hide behind it—just as painting did—I found out only after repeated acquaintance with Minimal works of art: Judd's, Morris's, Andre's, Steiner's, some but not all of Smithson's, some but not all of Lewitt's. Minimal Art can also hide

behind presence as size: I think of Bladen (though I am not sure whether he is a certified Minimalist) as well as of some of the artists just mentioned. What puzzles me, if I am puzzled, is how sheer size can produce an effect so soft and ingratiating, and at the same time so superfluous. Here again the question of the phenomenal as opposed to the esthetic or artistic comes in.

Having said all this, I won't deny that Minimal Art has brought a certain negative gain. It makes clear as never before how lousy a lot of earlier abstract sculpture is, especially that influenced by Abstract Expressionism. But the price may still not be worth it. The continuing infiltration of Good Design into what purports to be advanced and highbrow art now depresses sculpture as it does painting. Minimal follows too much where Pop, Op, Assemblage, and the rest have led (as Darby Bannard, once again, has already pointed out). Nevertheless, I take Minimal Art more seriously than I do these other forms of Novelty. I retain hope for certain of its exponents. Maybe they will take still more pointers from artists like Truitt, Caro, Ellsworth Kelly, and Kenneth Noland, and learn from their example how to rise above Good Design.

FIG. 47 Clement Greenberg's article "Recentness of Sculpture" in the April 20 issue of *Art International*, 1967, with illustrations of *Tribute*, *Thirtieth*, *Ship-Lap* (all 1962) and *Summer Run* (1964)

MARCH 21: A long profile of Truitt appears in *Mainichi Shimbun*, written by Stuart Griffin. Responding to the interviewer's surprise that she uses what he describes as "huge, wide foam-rubber and plastic rollers, house-painter's rollers" instead of traditional paintbrushes, Truitt explains, "I used to brush. I'll probably brush again, but not now. Now I use rollers." She also says she chooses colors by "felt intuition," and describes how "one blue line can grip and hold the color mass, keep it from slipping, tilting, how a black color can carry an illusion infinitesimally, out into invisible space."⁵⁶

APRIL 20: Clement Greenberg's essay "Recentness of Sculpture" is published in *Art International* (FIG. 47). The magazine spread includes a large reproduction of *Summer Run* (1964) and a group image of the three Truitt sculptures exhibited in "Black, White and Gray." The essay is Greenberg's first published assessment of Minimal art, which he largely dismisses as "Novelty Art" — a contrived attempt at avant-garde "far-outness." He singles out Truitt, along with Anthony Caro, as an artist who anticipated Minimalism:

The surprise of the box-like pieces in her first show in New York [at André Emmerich in 1963] was much like that which Minimal Art aims at. Despite their being covered with rectilinear zones of color, I was stopped by their dead-pan "primariness," and I had to look again and again, and I had to return again, to discover the power of these "boxes" to move and affect. [...] It was hard to tell whether the success of Truitt's best works was primarily sculptural or pictorial, but part of their success consisted precisely in making that question irrelevant.

However, Greenberg strongly differentiates Truitt's successful works from the inferior output of the "certified Minimalists":

Truitt's art did flirt with the look of non-art, and her 1963 show was the first occasion on which I noticed how this look could confer an effect of *presence*. That presence as achieved through size was esthetically extraneous, I already knew. That presence as achieved through the look of non-art was likewise esthetically extraneous, I did not yet know. Truitt's sculpture had this kind of presence but did not *hide* behind it. That sculpture could hide behind it — just as painting did — I found out only after repeated acquaintance with Minimal works of Judd's, Morris's, Andre's.

He concludes the essay with the hope that exponents of Minimalism will

“take still more pointers from artists like Truitt, Caro, Ellsworth Kelly, and Kenneth Noland, and learn from their example how to rise above Good Design.”⁵⁷

APRIL 24: Truitt writes to Louisa Jenkins, “I am so happy to be writing (at 8:30 AM in brilliant spring sunshine) the news that we are returning to America this summer. We will leave here in late June, and come home via Hawaii, and, hopefully, Big Sur. And then on to Washington, where James will be a sort of roving reporter for *Newsweek*, a job he looks forward to with relish.”⁵⁸

APRIL 28 TO JUNE 25: The group exhibition “American Sculpture of the Sixties,” curated by Maurice Tuchman, opens at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It is a broad survey of eighty artists, of which Truitt is one of five women, and includes her sculptures *Thirtieth* and *Shrove*, both from 1962. The exhibition will travel to the Philadelphia Museum of Art (September 15 to October 29). The accompanying catalogue for the exhibition includes Greenberg’s essay “Recentness of Sculpture,” as well as texts by Dore Ashton, Max Kozloff, Lucy Lippard, Irving Sandler, and others (FIG. 48).

Writing in *Arts Magazine*, Frederic Tuten will praise the exhibition, calling it “a culture epic two years in the making” and “probably the most expensive single show of modern American Art by an American museum.” Though Truitt is not mentioned in Tuten’s essay, *Thirtieth* and *Shrove* are pictured in an installation view.⁵⁹

MAY: Feeling apprehensive about her studio expenses and tightening household finances, Truitt begins preparing a Guggenheim Foundation grant application. Clement Greenberg advises that she should seek strong local support for the application, so she writes to John Walker, chief curator of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and asks for his recommendation, informing him that she already has the support of William Rubin and Kenneth Noland.⁶⁰ In her artist’s statement she says she will use the grant to “investigate the relationship between structure and color.” She continues,

In order to feel my way, I seem to need structures large enough to take fields of color. These structures have to be perfectly made, out of mahogany plywood of the finest quality or aluminum, and they are expensive to construct. They are then painted with between ten and fifteen coats of paint, some protective, with the final coat in Liquitex.

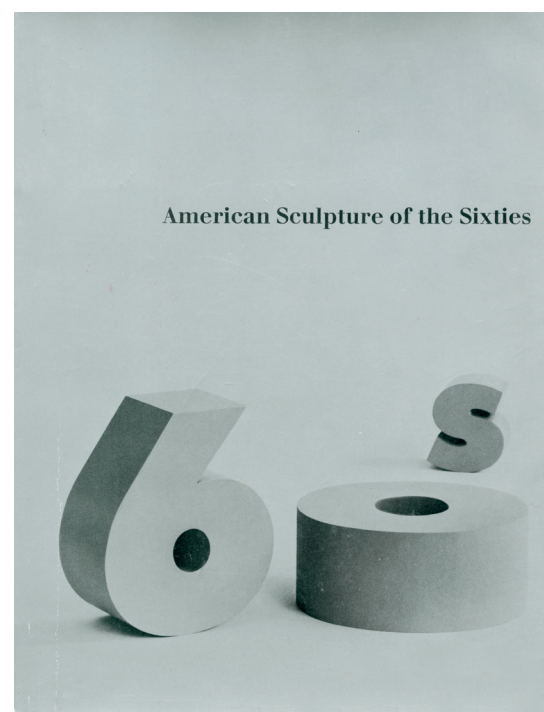


FIG. 48 Catalogue for the exhibition “American Sculpture of the Sixties” at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, April 1967

ART AND OBJECTHOOD

MICHAEL FRIED

Edwards' journals frequently explored and tested a meditation he seldom allowed to reach print; if all the world were annihilated, he wrote . . . and a new world were freshly created, though it were to exist in every particular in the same manner as this world, it would not be the same. Therefore, because there is continuity, which is time, "it is certain with me that the world exists anew every moment; that the existence of things every moment ceases and is every moment renewed."

The abiding assurance is that "we every moment see the same proof of a God as we should have seen if we had seen Him create the world at first."

— Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards

I

The enterprise known variously as Minimal Art, ABC Art, Primary Structures and Specific Objects is largely ideological. It seeks to declare and occupy a position — one which can be formulated in words, and in fact has been formulated by some of its leading practitioners. If this distinguishes it from modernist painting and sculpture on the one hand, it also marks an important difference between Minimal Art — or, as I prefer to call it, literalist art — and Pop or Op Art on the other. From its inception, literalist art has amounted to something more than an episode in the history of taste. It belongs rather to the history — almost the natural history — of sensibility; and it is not an isolated episode but the

expression of a general and pervasive condition. Its seriousness is vouched for by the fact that it is in relation both to modernist painting and modernist sculpture that literalist art defines or locates the position it aspires to occupy. (This, I suggest, is what makes what it declares something that deserves to be called a position.) Specifically, literalist art conceives of itself as neither one nor the other; on the contrary, it is motivated by specific reservations, or worse, about both; and it aspires, perhaps not exactly, or not immediately, to displace them, but in any case to establish itself as an independent art on a footing with either.

The literalist case against painting rests mainly on two counts: the relational character of almost all painting; and the ubiquitousness, indeed the virtual inescapability, of pictorial illusion. In Donald Judd's view,

when you start relating parts, in the first place, you're assuming you have a vague whole — the rectangle of the canvas — and definite parts, which is all screwed up, because you should have a definite whole and maybe no parts, or very few.

The more the shape of the support is emphasized, as in recent modernist painting, the tighter the situation becomes:

The elements inside the rectangle are broad and simple and correspond closely to the rectangle. The shapes and surface are only those which can occur plausibly within and on a rectangular plane. The parts are few and so subordinate to unity as not to be parts in an ordinary sense. A painting is nearly an entity, one thing, and not the indefinable sum of a group of entities and references. The one thing overpowers the earlier painting. It also establishes the rectangle as a definite form; it is no longer a fairly neutral limit. A form can be used only in so many ways. The rectangular plane is given a life span. The simplicity required to emphasize the rectangle limits the arrangements possible within it.

Painting is here seen as an art on the verge of exhaustion, one in which the range of acceptable solutions to a basic problem — how to organize the surface of the picture — is severely restricted. The use of shaped rather than rectangular supports can, from the literalist point of view, merely prolong the agony. The obvious response is to give up working on a single plane in favor of three dimensions. That, moreover, automatically gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors — which is residue of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art. The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface.

The literalist attitude toward sculpture is more ambiguous. Judd, for example, seems to think of what he calls Specific Objects as something

other than sculpture, while Robert Morris conceives of his own unmistakably literalist work as resuming the lapsed tradition of Constructivist sculpture established by Tatlin, Rodchenko, Gabo, Pevsner and Vantongerloo. But this and other disagreements are less important than the views Judd and Morris hold in common. Above all they are opposed to sculpture which, like most painting, is "made part by part, by addition, composed" and in which "specific elements . . . separate from the whole, thus setting up relationships within the work." (They would include the work of David Smith and Anthony Caro under this description.) It is worth remarking that the "part-by-part" and "relational" character of most sculpture is associated by Judd with what he calls anthropomorphism: "A beam thrusts; a piece of iron follows a gesture; together they form a naturalistic and anthropomorphic image. The space corresponds." Against such "multipart, infected" sculpture Judd and Morris assert the values of wholeness, singleness and indivisibility — of a work's being, as nearly as possible, "one thing," a single "Specific Object." Morris devotes considerable attention to "the use of strong gestalt or of unitary-type forms to avoid divisiveness"; while Judd is chiefly interested in the kind of wholeness that can be achieved through the repetition of identical units. The order at work in his pieces, as he once remarked of that in Stella's stripe paintings, "is simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another." For both Judd and Morris, however, the critical factor is shape. Morris's "unitary forms" are polyhedrons that resist being grasped other than as a single shape; the gestalt simply is the "constant, known shape." And shape itself is, in his system, "the most important sculptural value." Similarly, speaking of his own work, Judd has remarked that

the big problem is that anything that is not absolutely plain begins to have parts in some way. The thing is to be able to work and do different things and yet not break up the wholeness that a piece has. To me the piece with the brass and the five verticals is above all that shape.

The shape of the object: at any rate what secures the wholeness of the object is the singleness of the shape. It is, I believe, this emphasis on shape that accounts for the impression, which numerous critics have mentioned, that Judd's and Morris's pieces are hollow.

II

Shape has also been central to the most important painting of the past several years. In several recent essays I have tried to show how, in the work of Noland, Olitski and Stella, a conflict has gradually emerged between shape as a fundamental property of objects and shape as a medium of painting. Roughly, the success or failure of a given painting has come to depend on its ability to hold or stamp itself out or compel

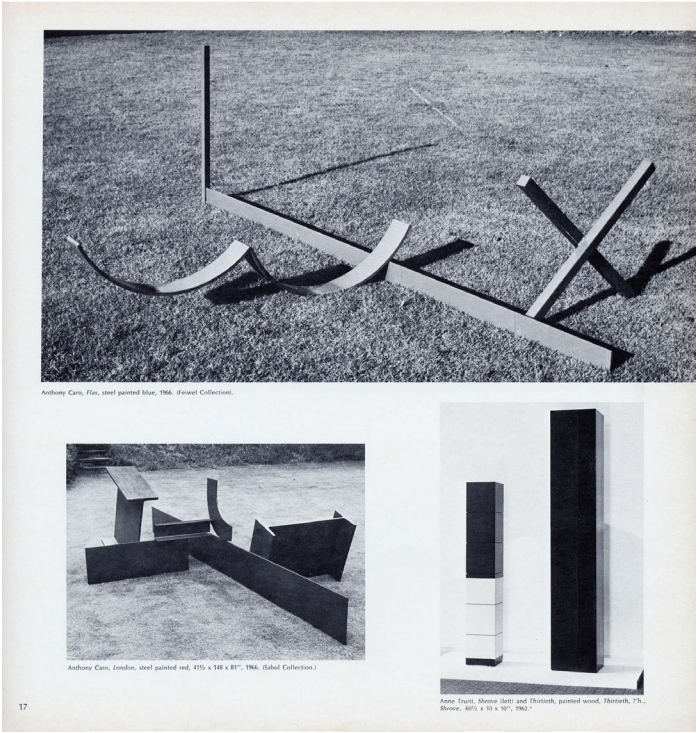


FIG. 49 Michael Fried's article "Art and Objecthood" in the summer 1967 issue of *Artforum*, with an illustration of *Shrove* and *Thirtieth* (both 1962) in the lower right

I would use the grant to cover the costs of making a series of these sculptures.⁶¹

The application will not be selected for funding.

MAY 14: In preparation for moving back to the States, Truitt packs her studio. In a letter to Louisa Jenkins from May 25 she writes, “The studio is closed, and the whole weight of my life has swung away from it, and from work. Not unhappily so. In fact happily.”⁶²

JUNE: Truitt receives a letter from V. V. Rankine asking if she would be interested in teaching art one day a week at the Madeira School, a private boarding school located in McLean, Virginia. Truitt writes the school’s headmistress and accepts the job sight unseen.

JUNE 1: Michael Fried’s essay “Art and Objecthood” is published in *Artforum*.⁶³ In it Fried cites Greenberg’s notion of “presence” as evidenced by Truitt’s sculptures, and expands upon Greenberg’s indictment of non-art — or what Fried calls “literalist” art — to include a class of artwork that is antithetical to modernist notions of painting and sculpture due to its inherent “theatricality.” Truitt’s sculptures *Shrove* and *Thirtieth* are included as illustrations (FIG. 49).

JUNE 3: James Lee Byars comes to stay with the Truitt family for nearly two weeks, in part so he can receive psychiatric care from Truitt’s analyst. In addition to his poor mental condition — Truitt describes him as being “on the brink of a real schizophrenic breakdown”⁶⁴ — he is suffering from a severe ear infection and pneumonia. On June 14 he will again leave for Los Angeles.

JUNE 26: The Truitt family departs Tokyo on an evening flight. Earlier in the day Truitt asks her driver, Tadao Ishikawa, to take her to the grounds of the Imperial Palace in Hibiya Park. She will later write in *Prospect*,

On the final day of our sojourn, late in the afternoon of the night on which we were to fly away forever, I stopped one last time. Treading in my familiar footsteps, I walked deliberately up the arch of the bridge, leaned over its cool stone wall, looked down — and saw my fish, my beautiful mythical golden fish, gliding, gliding, pledge of steadfast faith redeemed.⁶⁵

AUGUST 15 TO 17: Two shipments of Truitt’s Japanese sculptures arrive in Washington, DC. In 1969 Walter Hopps, newly appointed director of

the Corcoran Gallery of Art, will arrange for them to be placed in the institution's basement storage.

AUGUST 23: The family moves into their new house at 3520 Tilden Street NW in Washington, DC. Truitt recalls, "When I got back from Japan in 1967 I had this great upwelling of everything I wanted to do. I was back in my own place." Unable to afford an outside workspace, she sets up her studio in the basement. She buys Liquitex acrylic paints and, with newfound conviction, orders from Bill Lawrence at Gallagher Brothers Lumber (her pre-Japan fabricator) new armatures to be constructed from marine mahogany:

I worked. I ordered my sculptures and went right back to wood. I knew exactly what I was doing by now, and I went right back to the columnar structures. I had no hesitation whatsoever.

One of the first new sculptures is the aptly titled *Return* (FIG. 23). However, in what is likely a holdover from her aluminum methodology, Truitt decides to spray paint the work, with unsatisfactory results. "I thought spraying was just awful. It made me feel really sick. I had to wear a mask, which I hate doing, and my hand wasn't on the sculpture. I realized then that I'll never, never leave my brushes again, that I have to have my hand on the sculpture."

In an interview from 1976 Truitt will explain the importance of the brushstroke on the sculpture's surface in terms of its ability to "break up the surface and allow the eye to absorb form and color simultaneously as a single experience," as opposed to a more uniform or hard surface that "repels the eye."⁶⁶

During this period Truitt also makes a second discovery that will have a long-lasting impact on her sculpture technique. During a studio visit, Kenneth Noland makes a casual comment about sanding. Intrigued, Truitt purchases a power sander from Sears and Roebuck and begins experimenting with sanding the sculpture's surface between coats of paint. By the time she finishes *Moon Wind* and *Morning Choice*, in 1968, she will have arrived at a system of applying increasingly fine sandpapers after each coat of paint, allowing for a much more subtle, luminous sense of color in the finished work. "I also began putting on many more layers of paint. These came to have the meaning of skins to me, delicate membranes of color."⁶⁷

Moon Wind and *Morning Choice* are also notable for the addition of a square, half-inch-high riser that slightly elevates the work off the floor, creating the sense that the work is floating. This also allows for the

possibility of painting the bottom of the sculpture, thus casting a reflection of color onto the floor.

SEPTEMBER: Truitt begins teaching studio art two days a week at the Madeira School. She will continue to teach there, sometimes as often as four days a week, until 1972.

OCTOBER 20: In a letter to Louisa Jenkins, Truitt writes,

The studio is now in working order, and it's just as if I'd never left Washington in some sense or other. I feel cued back into myself. By chance two of my old pieces from 1962 and 63 had to be moved back into the studio and I had the opportunity to study what I had done, and see it really clearly for the first time. I also looked at my old drawings from 1963 and found myself in a new way.

She says that she is having "pillars" made and has begun making "a series of drawings unlike what I have done before — a sort of extension which I don't understand but which I am pursuing happily." Truitt also addresses her initial concerns about working in the Tilden Street basement:

I had been very anxious about working in the house, thinking that the proximity to my "other life" would bother me, but not at all. It's easier in a way. I simply run upstairs and look after the children, who are fairly independent anyway, and then down again and back to work. I guess those years of hard work have set up a sort of system inside me which makes the work pour out regardless of the conditions, which I had always thought had to be so rigid.

She mentions that "money is still a problem," but expresses hope for her Guggenheim grant application. She comments,

The old uncomfortable ambition seems to have left me, thank God, and I honestly believe that if I can find the money I can work quietly for the rest of my life. But, strangely enough, now that I don't care, I find that people are interested in what I do. Maybe that's the way it goes.⁶⁸

NOVEMBER 10 TO 12: Truitt takes the train to New York to visit friends and attend Kenneth Noland's one-person exhibition at André Emmerich Gallery. On Friday the 10th she sees James Lee Byars, whose mental and physical health seems to be greatly improved ("a bit pink in the face, as plump as he ever gets, with very long hair, and rather bizarre clothes which suit him all right"). On Saturday she meets with Helen

Frankenthaler, and that evening, after the Emmerich opening, she attends an after-party thrown for Noland. Describing the event in a letter to Louisa Jenkins, her sense of estrangement is palpable:

I could see clearly for the first time what the NY art world submerges in. A dark, great loft with a blue light at one end. A cauldron of beans surrounded by bottles of cheap red wine and cheaper white bread. People dressed in short dresses and beads and Indian costumes frantically hopping around to music so penetrating that your bones dissolve. Marijuana being smoked in a corner behind the coat racks. Fragmented encounters. Public communication on the level of sexuality which is instinctively so private. All this in an area which we were told was unsafe to leave except in groups because of violence in the streets. A fantasy of desperation, redeemed by a certain real gentleness between the people.⁶⁹

She arrives home Sunday in time to celebrate her son Sam's seventh birthday.

NOVEMBER 22: In a letter to Louisa Jenkins, Truitt writes, "I have started working again. Have reduced my shapes down to the most stark I can conceive, and the colors the closest. Sometimes so close I can barely discern them myself but this seems somehow important to me."⁷⁰

1968

APRIL 4: *Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. The ensuing six days of riots in Washington, DC, will result in twelve deaths, more than one thousand injuries, and more than six thousand arrests.*

APRIL 6 TO OCTOBER 6: Truitt is included in an exhibition of "sculpture, murals, and fountains" as part of HemisFair '68, the official World's Fair held in San Antonio, Texas. The accompanying catalogue describes the exhibition as "an anthology of contemporary art from the works of one hundred and sixteen artists from twenty-nine nations and six continents." Truitt's contribution is *Back* (1964). Notably, the sculpture is exhibited outdoors. Along with the upcoming Dayton Art Institute exhibition in the fall, it is one of the last times any of the Japanese sculptures will ever be exhibited.

MAY: Clement Greenberg writes a feature profile about Truitt for the May "American Woman" issue of *Vogue* (FIG. 50). Titled "Changer: Anne



FIG. 50 Article on Anne Truitt by Clement Greenberg in the May 1968 issue of Vogue



FIG. 51 Truitt's sculptures (with rolled canvases by Thomas Downing in the foreground and a Morris Louis painting on the back wall) during the artist's assessment of her work at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1971

Truitt, An American Artist whose Painted Structures helped to Change the Course of American Sculpture,” the article is accompanied by an image of the work *Odeskalki*, from 1963, and a full-page portrait of Truitt, taken outside the Tilden Street house, by celebrity photographer Antony Armstrong-Jones, AKA Lord Snowdon.

Greenberg argues that the success of Truitt’s “boxes” comes from “what she does to them with color and drawing,” adding that she is “one of the very, very few living sculptors who has used applied color with consistent success.” He also makes a case for the works in Truitt’s 1963 show as “first examples” of Minimal Art,⁷¹ and ends by commenting on the artist’s distance from the New York art world, both in terms of her recent “exile in Japan” and her return to Washington, where “she is hardly any closer there to Max’s Kansas City Bar in New York City than she was in Tokyo.”

She remains less known than she should be as a radical innovator. She certainly does not “belong.” But then how could a housewife, with three small children, living in Washington belong? How could such a person fit the role of pioneer of far-out art?⁷²

JUNE 5: *Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles.*

JULY 5: At the invitation of Walter Hopps, Truitt moves her studio to 1928 Calvert Street NW in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington. The building is owned by the Corcoran Gallery of Art and is used to host artist workspaces as part of an informal fellowship program.

SEPTEMBER 13: The group exhibition “A Contemporary Selection 1968” opens at the Dayton Art Institute in Ohio. Truitt is the only woman in a roster of fifteen artists, which includes Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Smithson. Truitt will show the work *Late Snow* from 1964. It is the last time one of the aluminum sculptures from Japan is exhibited. After the exhibition, the sculpture will be inadvertently destroyed in transit due to a car accident.

1971

DECEMBER: Preparing for her mid-career retrospectives at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1973–74) and the Corcoran Gallery of Art (1974), Truitt and Walter Hopps review all the works still in the artist’s possession, which have been in basement storage at the Corcoran. She will recall,

He had it brought up into a lot of different galleries on the second floor. First he brought up all of the sculpture I had done in Japan, which I said I was going to destroy. I do not think he agreed with me until he looked at it. Then he did not disagree with me. I was totally correct. I have never regretted it.

Eighteen sculptures in total are destroyed. In subsequent writings and interviews Truitt has talked about why she felt the Japan sculptures were unsuccessful, even though she has acknowledged the strength of her two-dimensional works from the same period. In addition to her misgivings about the impermeability of aluminum — she called the resulting works “painted sculptures” in which “the paint lies on the surface”⁷³ — she was also unsatisfied with her colors when viewed outside of Japan. She will write in *Daybook* that

A complicating element was the light in Japan, entirely different from that of the United States. When I brought sculptures from Japan to New York for exhibition in 1965, I was horrified to see that the color looked wrong.⁷⁴

Ultimately however, it was the “simply intelligent, lifeless”⁷⁵ aspect of these works with which Truitt found greatest fault — the sense that “there was nothing there but what you saw” due to a lack of a “psychological [or] spiritual center.” Years later Truitt will reflect,

Now I think a lot of people make art, as they call it — I hate that phrase — out of art. I think they make art the way people practice law. They practice art. And they practice it out of a theory and out of what they know about art and what other artists have done. But I think people who have some sort of real impulse in art never do that, and when you feel you don’t have that impulse, it’s best to stop. I’m glad I destroyed all my [early] work in 1962, and I’m glad I destroyed all my Japanese sculpture. You just have to follow your own instincts. You have to be kind of stubborn about that.



FIG. 52 *Envoy*, 1966. Acrylic on aluminum. 59 ½ x 18 x 15 inches; 151 x 46 x 38 cm. Photographed at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1971

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, this and all subsequent Anne Truitt quotes are from authorized transcripts of the Anne Truitt Audio Archives, 1997–2001, © 2015, The Estate of Anne Truitt, South Salem, New York.
2. Although working in a different artistic milieu (she was known for her work in mosaic) and more than twenty years Truitt's senior, Louisa Jenkins, based in Big Sur, shared an intimate connection with Truitt that would deepen over the course of their Japan correspondence. Truitt spoke of her as a kind of role model: "She lived alone, which I liked. And her studio was a really good studio — she built it herself. I liked her independence, and I liked her self-direction."
3. Anne Truitt, *Daybook: The Journal of an Artist* (New York: Scribner, 2013), p. 156.
4. Truitt met Noland during her studies at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Washington, DC, 1948 to 1949. See Truitt, *Daybook*, p. 79.
5. "Seven New Shows," *Newsweek* (February 18, 1963), p. 64.
6. Jill Johnston, "Review: Anne Truitt," *ARTnews* (March 1963), p. 16.
7. Michael Fried, "New York Letter," *Art International* VII/4 (April 25, 1963), pp. 54–56.
8. Donald Judd, "New York Exhibitions: In the Galleries," *Arts Magazine* 37, no. 7 (April 1963), p. 61.
9. Anne Louise Bayly, "Oral history interview with Anne Truitt, April–August 2002," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (online resource).
10. The Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collections Department holds thirty-six of these mail art works as part of the Anne Truitt Papers.
11. Truitt in Bayly.
12. "Interview with Anne Truitt," *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo (March 22, 1964). Translated by Ruri Kawashima. Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 8, Folder 5.
13. Anne Truitt, *Prospect: The Journey of an Artist* (New York: Penguin, 1997), pp. 217–18.
14. Anne Truitt, typewritten notes dated July 15, 1987, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 11, Folder 1.
15. Cicely D'Autremont Angleton and Anne Truitt, "In Angleton's Custody," letter to the editor, *New York Times Book Review* (November 5, 1995), p. 5.
16. "Art shows by Jenkins, Miss Truitt," *Tokyo Mainichi Daily News* (October 29, 1964), p. B3.
17. Newspaper clipping and accompanying translation, date and author n.d., Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 8, Folder 5.
18. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965), pp. 74–82.
19. Clement Greenberg, "Changer: Anne Truitt, American Artist Whose Painted Structures Helped to Change the Course of American Sculpture," *Vogue* (May 1968), p. 284.
20. Clement Greenberg, letter to Anne Truitt, March 12, 1965, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 1.
21. Vivien Raynor, "In the Galleries: Anne Truitt," *Arts Magazine* 39 (April 1965), p. 58.
22. Lawrence Campbell, "Reviews and Previews," *ARTnews*, vol. LXIV, no. 1 (April 1965), p. 14.
23. "The Mouse's Tale" is a concrete poem that appears in Carroll's novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.
24. Anne Truitt, typed document titled "Exhibitions 1950s," hand-dated July 1987, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 1, Folder 1.
25. "Anne Truitt Interviewed by Howard Fox," *Sun & Moon: A Quarterly of Literature & Art*, no. 1 (Winter 1976), p. 49.
26. Anne Truitt, letter to André Emmerich, August 26, 1965, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 14, Folder 7.
27. Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," *Art in America* 53:5 (October/November 1965), pp. 57–69.
28. André Emmerich, letter to Anne Truitt, October 6, 1965, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 14, Folder 7.
29. Anne Truitt, handwritten text, November 23, 1965, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 1, Folder 20.
30. Anne Truitt, handwritten text, December 2, 1965, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 1, Folder 20.
31. Gerald Nordland, "Anne Truitt" in *7 Sculptors* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, 1965), pp. 38–39.
32. Anne Truitt, typewritten letter to Clement Greenberg, December 20, 1965, unsent, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 1, Folder 20.
33. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, March 11, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
34. Anne Truitt, handwritten letter to Clement Greenberg, January 8, 1966, unsent, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 1, Folder 20.
35. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, April 9, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
36. Kynaston McShine, letter to Anne Truitt, March 7, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 8, Folder 10.
37. Kynaston McShine, "Introduction," *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1966), unpaginated.
38. Anne Truitt, "Artist Statement," *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1966), unpaginated.
39. Anne Truitt, typewritten manuscript dated May 23, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 1.
40. Anne Truitt, letter to André Emmerich, June 20, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 14, Folder 7.
41. Clement Greenberg, letter to Anne Truitt, June 18, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 1.
42. Anne Truitt, Letter to Clement Greenberg, June 22, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 1.
43. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, August 8, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
44. Anne Truitt Audio Archives, 1997–2001, © 2015, The Estate of Anne Truitt, South Salem, New York.
45. Interview with Jay Levenson, Director, International Program, MoMA, August 30, 2010: <http://www.moma.org/>

explore/inside_out/2010/08/30/what-is-momas-international-program/

46. Tim Osterwald, *Pop Art* (Cologne: Taschen, 1999), p. 236.
47. James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the 1960s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 282.
48. Truitt, *Prospect*, p. 166.
49. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, November 20, 1966, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
50. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, February 16, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
51. Ibid.
52. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, March 7, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
53. Edited draft for press release, undated, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 8, Folder 13.
54. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, March 13, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
55. Ibid.
56. Stuart Griffin, "Meeting the People: Anne Dean Truitt," *Mainichi Shimbun* (March 21), 1967.
57. Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," *Art International* 11, no. 4 (April 1967), pp. 19–21.
58. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, April 24, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
59. Frederic Tuten, "American Sculpture of the Sixties: A Los Angeles Super Show," *Arts Magazine*, 41: 7 (May 1967), pp. 40–42.
60. Anne Truitt, letter to John Walker, undated, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 1, Folder 1.
61. Anne Truitt, typewritten document, undated, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 1, Folder 1.
62. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, May 25, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections

Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.

63. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 6 (June 1967), pp. 12–23.
64. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, June 8, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
65. Truitt, *Prospect*, pp. 217–18.
66. "Anne Truitt Interviewed by Howard Fox," *Sun & Moon: A Quarterly of Literature & Art*, no. 1 (Winter 1976), p. 45.
67. Anne Truitt, Lecture for Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, February 1976. Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 19, Folder 4.
68. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, October 20, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
69. Anne Truitt, letter to Louisa Jenkins, November 22, 1967, Anne Truitt Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library, Box 15, Folder 2.
70. Ibid.
71. The following year, writing in *Studio International*, Donald Judd will take exception with Greenberg's assertion, citing the January 1963 Green Gallery group show "New Works II" that featured Judd, Robert Morris, and Dan Flavin. Responding specifically to Greenberg's speculation that had the works in Truitt's 1963 Emmerich show been monochrome they would have qualified as the "first example of orthodox Minimal Art," Judd will comment: "If the queen had balls, she would be king." See Donald Judd, "Complaints: Part I," *Studio International*, April 1969.
72. Clement Greenberg, "Changer: Anne Truitt," *Vogue* (May 1968), pp. 212–13, 284.
73. "Anne Truitt Interviewed by Howard Fox," *Sun & Moon: A Quarterly of Literature & Art*, no. 1 (Winter 1976), p. 50.
74. Truitt, *Daybook*, p. 32.
75. Ibid.

CATALOGUE OF THE JAPAN SCULPTURES

Anne Truitt made twenty-three sculptures in Japan, all in acrylic on aluminum. Eighteen sculptures remained in the artist's possession when she decided to destroy them in 1971. We have been unable to locate the others.



Back, 1964
79 × 19 × 19 inches;
201 × 48 × 48 cm
Location unknown



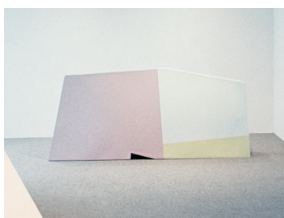
Down, 1964
70 ½ × 19 ¼ × 14 inches;
179 × 49 × 36 cm
Destroyed 1971



Here, 1964
78 ½ × 19 ¼ × 20 inches;
199 × 50 × 51 cm
Destroyed 1971



Out, 1964
78 × 14 × 19 ¾ inches;
84 × 244 × 28 cm
Destroyed 1971



Late Snow, 1964
33 × 96 × 11 inches;
84 × 244 × 28 cm
Destroyed 1968



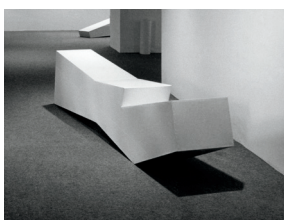
Morning Walk, 1964
38 × 11 × 8 ½ inches;
97 × 28 × 22 cm
Destroyed 1971



Sea Garden, 1964
33 × 96 × 14 inches;
84 × 244 × 36 cm
Destroyed 1971



Summer Run, 1964
92 × 27 × 27 inches;
234 × 69 × 69 cm
Location unknown



Wait, 1964
23 ½ × 110 × 24 inches;
60 × 279 × 61 cm
Destroyed 1971



Winter Solstice, 1964
118 × 18 × 20 inches;
300 × 46 × 51 cm
Location unknown



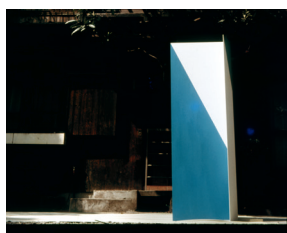
Bolt, 1965
78 1/2 × 33 × 12 inches;
199 × 84 × 30 cm
Destroyed 1971



Jag, 1965
78 × 23 × 12 inches;
198 × 58 × 31 cm
Destroyed 1971



Just, 1965
78 ½ × 32 ¼ × 39 ½ inches;
199 × 82 × 100 cm
Destroyed 1971



Lake Bird, 1965
78 ½ × 32 ¼ × 25 inches;
199 × 70 × 64 cm
Destroyed 1971



Signal, 1965
79 × 33 ½ × 12 inches;
201 × 85 × 30 cm
Destroyed 1971



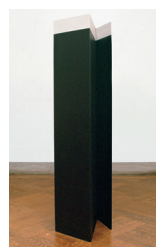
A Song for Frogs, 1966
39 × 39 × 30 inches;
99 × 99 × 76 cm
Destroyed 1971



A Wall for Apricots, 1966
78 ½ × 39 ½ × 17 inches;
199 × 100 × 43 cm
Destroyed 1971



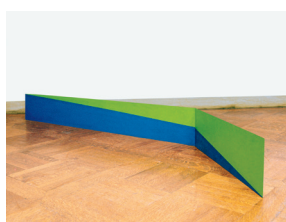
Brunt, 1966
48 × 82 × 30 inches;
151 × 46 × 38 cm
Destroyed 1971



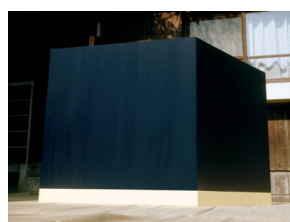
Envoy, 1966
59 ½ × 18 × 15 inches;
151 × 46 × 38 cm
Destroyed 1971



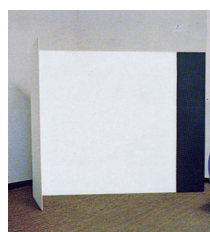
Hill River, 1966
49 × 54 × 28 inches;
125 × 137 × 71 cm
Destroyed 1971



Spring Wind, 1966
39 × 79 × 10 inches;
99 × 201 × 25 cm
Destroyed 1971



Western Line, 1966
39 ½ × 65 × 18 inches;
100 × 165 × 46 cm
Destroyed 1971



Title unknown, 1966
48 × 59 × 25 ¼ inches;
122 × 150 × 64 cm
Location unknown

Anne Truitt in Japan is published to accompany
an exhibition at the Matthew Marks Gallery
523 West 24th Street, New York,
from September 11 to October 23, 2015.

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Craig Garrett
PROJECT EDITOR: Ted Turner
EDITING: Charles Gute
DESIGN: Familiar
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Sue Medicott
PRINTING: Artron, Shenzhen, China

Artworks by Anne Truitt © annetruitt.org/
Bridgeman Images
Essay © 2015 Anna Lovatt
Chronology © 2015 Anne Truitt LLC
Catalogue © 2015 Matthew Marks Gallery

PHOTOGRAPHY

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are
© annetruitt.org/Bridgeman Images

Ron Amstutz: jacket, pp. 15 (top), 16 (top), 20 (top),
23, 24, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 46, 47, 49, 51,
53, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 69,
71, 73, 74, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 84, 85, 87, 113

The Jewish Museum/Art Resource, New York:
p. 111 (top)

ISBN 978-1-880146-92-7

Matthew Marks Gallery
523 W 24th Street
New York, NY 10011
www.matthewmarks.com

FRONTISPIECE: Anne Truitt in the garden of her
Tokyo home, c. 1965